Friday March 14 1997

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Minister's 'evil scum' tirade at McAliskey

David Hencke and Sarah Boseley

A HOME Office minister has accused the unconvicted Roisin McAliskey, who is being held in Holloway jail, of being "evil IRA scum" and says he feels as much sympathy for her as he would for the Moors murderer Myra Hindley.

David Maclean, who is in charge of criminal policy, wrote in outspoken terms to a 79-year-old constituent about the plight of Ms McAliskey, who is pregnant and facing extradition to Germany on charges over the bombing of Osnabruck barracks.

The Prison Service ruled yesterday that she will not be separated from her baby, which is due in May.

In reply to a letter protesting about her treatment, the minister says: "When the day comes that the evil scum of the IRA are no longer murdering the innocent, and our children are no longer tortured by the Hindleys of this world, then I am certain that when I no longer need all my compassion for the innocent I shall be able to spare some for the perpetrators."

Mr Maclean, who is in charge of criminal policy, recently said most London beggars were "aggressive Scots", says he pleads guilty to having no compassion for criminals.

In his letter to Judith Naylor he attacks the pensioner for raising Ms McAliskey's plight by comparing her fate with the 23-year-old soldier Stephen Restorick, who was shot dead by the IRA last month.

"He was just a young British soldier doing his duty, trying to protect the public and save lives in Northern Ireland. You are worried that the IRA prisoner will be denied some fundamental human rights when giving birth. Where were the lobby groups and prison reformers worried about Stephen Restorick?

"You are campaigning for her to breast-feed her baby; who is campaigning for the Stephen Restoricks of this world who will never bounce a baby on their knee ever again? No doubt over the next few months we will all become familiar with the name of this IRA prisoner as campaign groups up and down the country defend her rights."

"Stephen Restorick's name ... will soon be forgotten, along with all the other victims of crime, unless people like me (but more importantly the vast majority of ordinary people in this country) think more about the good people in society rather than the evil."

Mrs Naylor, a constituent of the minister in Appleby, Cumbria, said last night: "I don't think Mr Maclean should continue to stay in office. Whatever the woman has done or not done she does not deserve to be treated like that. I have been so ashamed that I have written to the Irish ambassador about her treatment. I also wrote to Lord Whitelaw, who was much more sympathetic than Mr Maclean but said he could not do anything about it."

Ms McAliskey's security rating was recently dropped from the maximum to standard category A.

She is to be moved to a mother and baby unit at Holloway prison, where she will mix freely with other prisoners and their children, after the birth, due in two months' time.

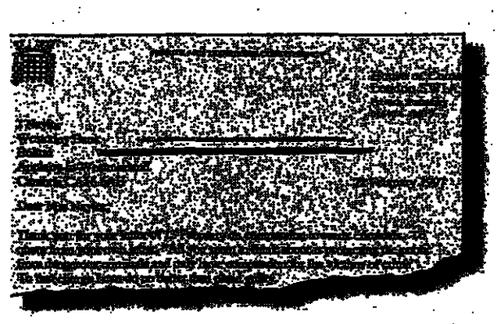
The decision followed Ms McAliskey's interview yesterday by a panel of health care and social work professionals, together with prison officers.

Her case has grown into a cause celebre, with protests in London, Ireland and the United States.

Mrs Naylor, a Bhuddist who lives in a small cottage in the Pennines, is no supporter of the IRA and knows both Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, but she has written to newspapers, including the Guardian, on the treatment of prisoners.

The outspoken minister appears oblivious to the fact that Ms McAliskey is on remand and has not been convicted of any offence and that the comments could be seen as prejudicial to a fair trial.

Mr Maclean said last night that he had no more comment to make.



Roisin McAliskey, whose plight David Maclean compares with that of Stephen Restorick

'I saw an Arab soldier running towards us and firing his rifle. Many of the girls fell to the ground and there was a lot of blood'

— Karen Ivri, 13

Israeli schoolgirls in the town of Beit Shemesh grieve for their friends who were shot dead by a Jordanian soldier yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: YOAV LEMMER

Massacre of the schoolgirls

Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

SEVEN Israeli schoolgirls were shot dead yesterday and six wounded, one critically, when a Jordanian army driver fired on them at close range during a school outing to the Jordanian border region.

The attack came as tension mounted in the region over the Israeli government's decision to go ahead next week with plans to extend Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and to close Palestinian offices.

The United States tried to portray the killing as an isolated act of murder, but Israelis and Palestinians blamed the political crisis.

The Palestinian minister Hanan Ashrawi said Israeli settlement policy had created "an atmosphere of hostility and distrust which is conducive to violence".

The soldier, identified as Ahmed Moussa, aged 26, sprayed the girls, aged 13 and 14, with automatic gunfire from an M16 rifle snatched from another soldier as they sat in an army vehicle before he was overpowered by other Jordanian soldiers.

He then climbed out of the Jeep, chased the terrified students while shooting, changed clips in his gun and fired more shots before he was overpowered by Jordanian soldiers.

"All the girls screamed and cried and ran beneath bushes to hide. Many were hurt and bloody. I was hit in the leg," said Hila Ivri, aged 14, at a hospital in northern Israel. Her sister was shot in the stomach.

"I heard shots," said Oranit, one of the wounded girls. "I turned around and saw a soldier put in a magazine clip and fire. We ran down the hill and took cover. He fired at my hand."

A witness, Raz Hess, said that at one point the soldier fired from close range and aimed at the head of one of the girls. He said Jordanian soldiers stood by as the gunman fired and "did nothing until he finished shooting".

"We were standing with our backs to the Jordanian soldiers," said Karen Ivri, aged 13, who was shot in the abdomen. "Suddenly, as I turned around, I saw an Arab soldier running towards us and firing from his rifle. Many of the girls fell to the ground and there was a lot of blood. There were many shouts and cries; the rest of the girls ran towards the open fields."

Forty-four girls from the Ferst school in Beit Shemesh, 12 miles south-west of Jerusalem, were on an annual school outing with their teachers to the "island of peace" on the Jordan river.

Last night King Hussein of Jordan cut short a visit to Spain and returned to Amman to take personal charge of the investigation. He said it was as if his own home and his own children had been attacked.

Some Israelis have blamed King Hussein for the poisoned political atmosphere leading up to yesterday's tragedy.

Earlier this week he accused Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, of derailing the Middle East peace process with his hardline policies.

"Perhaps the conclusion is that the king must hold his tongue so that a soldier does not take his words to mean more than he intended," the Israeli education minister, Zevulum Hammer, told Israeli Army Radio.

Rafi Benishti, one of the teachers on the school outing, accused the the Jordanian soldiers of not reacting quickly enough.

"The soldiers didn't do anything to stop the murderer," he said. "They didn't even allow us to evacuate the wounded, they were only shouting, 'He's a *majnoon*, he's a *majnoon* [he's crazy, he's crazy]'."

General Yitzhak Mordechai, Israel's defence minister, who arrived at the scene accompanied by Jordan's Crown Prince Hasan, also complained of the delay.

Israeli rescue teams told Mr Mordechai that 40 precious minutes were wasted because the Jordanian soldiers refused to allow Israeli ambulances into the area.

Abraham Ben Hammo, one of the first ambulance drivers to arrive on the scene, said he had to beg the soldiers to allow him to evacuate the wounded.

"A long time passed before they allowed me to take one dead and one wounded girl back to the hospital," he said.

Five girls were taken to a Jordanian hospital where they died of their wounds. The Israelis say the Jordanians took at least 20 minutes to transport the girls by bus to the Shuneh hospital, six miles away.

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Thatcher gives Blair blessing

Euan MacAskill and Michael White

LADY Thatcher has dealt John Major's election campaign another significant blow by privately admitting that Tony Blair will "not let Britain down" if he comes to power in 50 days' time.

Although the former prime minister's private office protested that she will be working for a fifth Tory victory, it did not deny the accuracy of the remark, used unattributably in an article last weekend by Peter Stothard, editor of the Times.

In his article, Mr Stothard wrote of a conversation with "a very senior Conservative for whom 'Tony Blair is a man who won't ... let ... Britain ... down'. Every one of these words falls singly with a thud and repeats like whispered thunder."

Mr Stothard himself offered a ritual "no comment" after Tribune, the leftwing weekly, reported yesterday that Lady Thatcher was the Conservative quoted.

A spokeswoman for Lady Thatcher said: "There's no question of her wanting anything other than a Tory victory. She is is a Conservative and wants the Conservatives to win."

The failure to repudiate the Tribune report contrasts with a strongly worded denial from her office on Wednesday over a Daily Express claim that Lady Thatcher is actively helping the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, in his campaign for the Tory leadership.

Most Tory MPs are now resigned to defeat in the election.

Mr Major yesterday ruled out clarifying the election timetable — all but certainly leading to a May 1 poll — after the morning cabinet meeting. He also said he would not use this weekend's spring Tory council in Bath to name a date. The Leader

turn to page 3, column 4

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YOUNG OR OLD - THE PAIN'S THE SAME

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Sketch

Rt Hon turncoat in pallid form

Simon Hoggart

SIR George Gardiner, the latest defector from the Tory Party, walked into the Chamber at the very moment that Peter Oppenheim was trying to explain that Tories were united on a single European currency. There were happy, ironical cheers from the Labour Party.

Sir George's weird pallor was even more marked than usual. He has come to resemble one of those albino frogs whose unearthly colour was attributed this week to global warming. (Though even if global warming does exist, it shouldn't affect people who live below the earth's crust.)

He was cheerily welcomed by the Chancellor: "I remember when he was a passionate member of the European Movement. He seems to have moved away from my views, but I always hope that he may return." Even Mr Clarke's sarcasm is full of bonhomie.

But everyone was at ease. If the Prime Minister had been any more relaxed he would have fallen asleep. We are seeing so many events, probably for the last time. The next Treasury Questions will almost certainly feature a new Chancellor. Mike Fabricant, the most junior aide to the most junior Treasury minister, will never again sit proudly behind the Government front bench, his fingers having been painfully prised from the precipice of power.

Mr Blair rose briefly and asked the House to recall the victims of Dunblane. "We remember the little ones, we grieve with their parents and their friends . . . our thoughts and prayers are with them."

Mr Major said that Mr Blair spoke for everyone in the House and beyond. They had both visited the school. "Neither of us will ever forget the scenes we saw there."

Did Mr Blair mean what he said? Of course he did, every word. But politicians are not like us. They see everything two ways, like a fly with eyes pointing in opposite directions. Yes, he was sincere; yes, he must also have been pleased that it was him who appeared to be speaking for the country, and Mr Major who was obliged to echo him later. This isn't hypocrisy; if you can't judge a situation as finely as this, you shouldn't be in politics.

(Odd, though, that neither thought to mention yesterday's dead Israeli schoolgirls. Not very many crucial swing votes in Naharayim, perhaps, or am I being too cynical?)

Then Sir George was called. "Speak for England, George!" yelled the Labour yobboes. He complained about the amount taxpayers spent to fund the European Movement. Mr Major replied: "I cannot give a figure to my . . ." (he was going to call the turncoat his honourable friend) ". . . to the honourable *member*." Half-asleep he may have been, but he managed to catch that just in time.

By the way, I see that London cabbies are to be paid to plug mobile phones to their passengers, by casually dropping the subject into the conversation. Since most cabbies only want to talk about the evil of minicabs, this will make a change. If you get a driver plugging telephones, shut him up by saying: "I could use a mobe, so I could call up a minicab instead of spending hours trying to hail one of you lot in the street and getting 'King's Cross, nah, out of my way, mate'."

But, of course, a similar scheme has arguably operated in the House for years. Only this week during PM's Questions, John Greenway dropped in a reference to the insurance industry — which pays him tens of thousands of pounds a year.

And — I have not made this up — somebody once tried to sponsor this column. Noting my obsession with oily greasers, a malt whisky distillery wanted to pay money to offer a weekly award to "The Old Smoothie", which was the slogan for their beverage. So this column would have been headed "The McSheepshagger's Sketch," like the Littlewood's Cup Final and Cadbury's Coronation Street. I refused. This is one national treasure which will never be sold off.

West sends warships for foreign nationals but backs away from intervention as Albanian chaos spreads

Europe deaf to Berisha plea

John Palmer in Brussels, Joanna Robertson and Helena Smith in Tirana, and agencies

ALBANIA'S beleaguered president, Sali Berisha, made a desperate appeal for European military intervention to restore order in his anarchic country, but Western capitals showed little readiness to get involved and Nato warships arrived only to rescue foreign nationals.

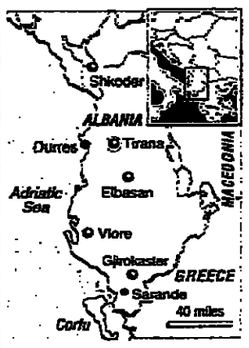
Hundreds of convicts escaped as guards deserted their posts at the main prison in the capital, Tirana, and armed gangs roamed the streets shooting into the air and ransacking food warehouses.

Tirana's airport was seized by rebels, forcing frightened foreigners to seek evacuation by sea.

The British embassy in Tirana organised a convoy to the Adriatic port of Durres carrying 120 foreign citizens: 65 Britons, 11 from the Commonwealth, three Irish nationals and 52 others. They were due to embark on two Italian warships yesterday evening.

Italian helicopters ferried 400 Italians and other foreign nationals to the battleships. United States forces in the Adriatic were poised to evacuate American citizens. US helicopters landed in Tirana to evacuate American expatriates in an operation the state department said could last for hours or even days.

The rioting, which followed the collapse of fraudulent pyramid saving schemes in January, has spread across most of the country. The police and



army have melted away as mobs have broken into their barracks and seized weapons. Mr Berisha's government seems to have lost its grip on Tirana and the north, which it held until yesterday.

The president summoned supporters and opposition politicians and persuaded them to sign a joint appeal for intervention from the Western European Union, the European members of Nato.

A WEU spokesman in Brussels said: "The Albanian parties are asking for us to mobilise and deploy a buffer force to separate the different factions." The WEU, the EU's fledgling defence arm, does not have a permanent standing military force designed to respond to security crises.

In Berlin, Klaus Kinkel, the German foreign minister, told a meeting of British and German officials: "The chaos in Albania can no longer be halted."

An EU official said last night: "If we go into Albania, who are we meant to shoot?"

The United Nations Security Council was considering a request yesterday from Mr Berisha to consider the crisis.

In Tirana, Mr Berisha met the government and party political leaders. Skender Gjinushi, leader of the opposition Social Democrats, claimed the president had admitted he no longer had control of the army or police.

"The president is responsible, totally. He is the commander-in-chief and he has no soldiers and nobody to give orders to," Mr Gjinushi said.

He added that Mr Berisha had shown no willingness to comply with the rebels' demands for him to step down. Many investors blame him for failing to safeguard their savings in the collapsed pyramid schemes and even profiting from them.

Among the 600 prisoners who fled Tirana's central prison were two senior leaders of the opposition Socialists, the former president, Ramiz Alia, and the former prime minister, Fatos Nano, according to a guard.

At least 12 people were killed and 50 injured as trouble spread across. Insurgents emptied armories in Shkoder, northern Albania's biggest town, in a night of mayhem in which four people were killed and at least 20 wounded, hospital officials said.

In the south, border guards abandoned a customs post on the Greek border at Kapshtice, leaving it to the rebels.

Trouble was reported in Korca in the east and, for the first time, in Durres on the coast. Three people died in Elbasan, two each in Korca and Cerrik, and one in Puka.

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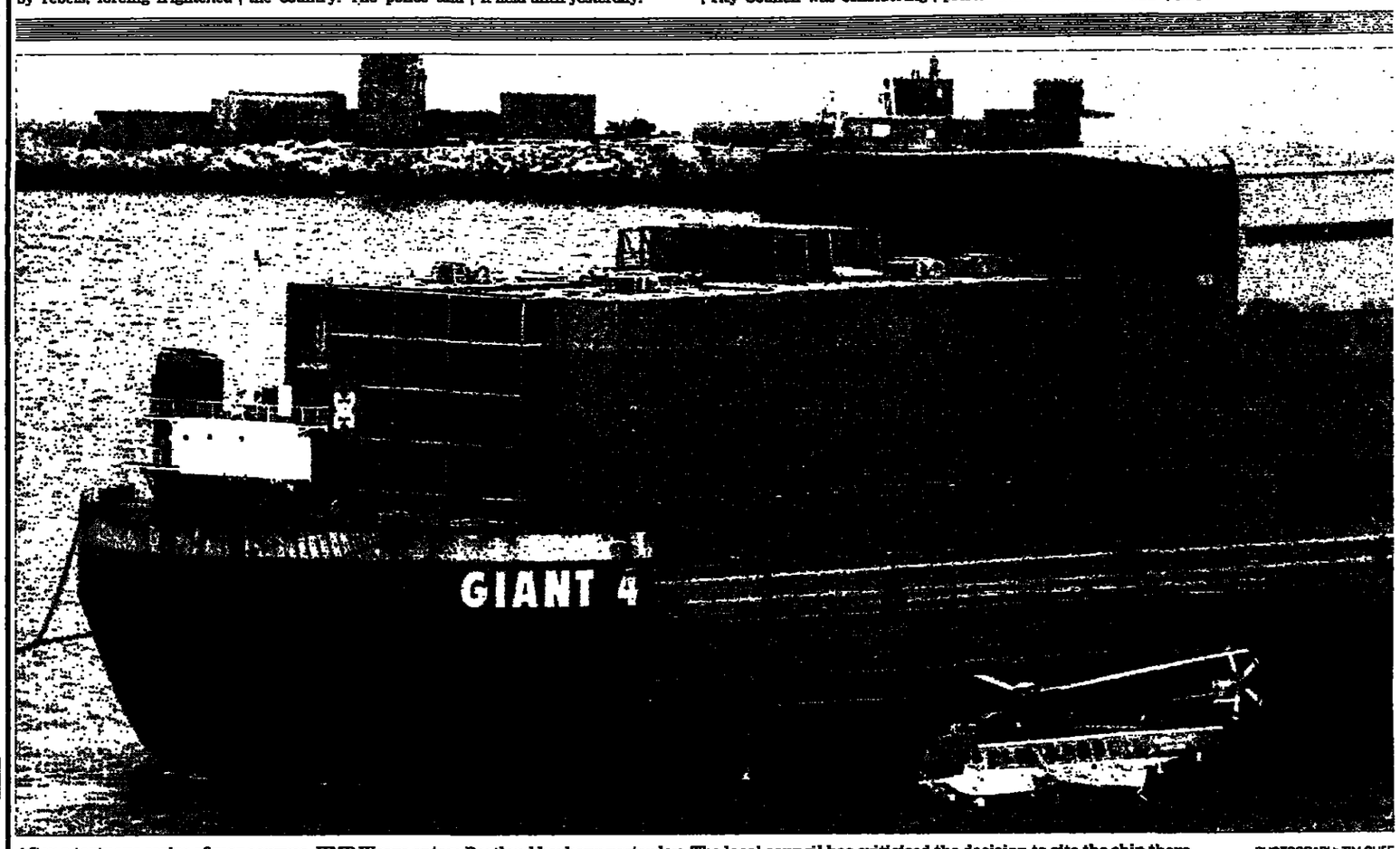

After a tortuous series of manoeuvres, HMP Weare enters Portland harbour yesterday. The local council has criticised the decision to site the ship there PHOTOGRAPH: TIM CUFF

Locals take fright at berth of prison monster

Kamal Ahmed

IT CAME, it stopped. It went forwards, it went backwards. It turned around. It went forwards again.

In a laborious and sometimes farcical operation, Britain's first prison ship since the reign of Queen Victoria arrived at its new home in Portland, Dorset, yesterday to resignation and anger from the local population.

"It's monstrous," said Pam Warley, one of a small knot of Portlanders who came to see just how ugly the 130 metre vessel is.

They were not disappointed. Five floors of grey steel, the prison block itself, are topped by a quadrant with four metre high fences crowned by wire — the exercise yard.

The only splash of colour was a man in orange overalls gesticulating to the tug captains as they pushed and pulled the ship in a ponderous sea-going ballet.

Yesterday there were fresh question marks over the project after the local council published a 10-point report criticising the Government's decision to site the ship in Portland harbour, already scarred by disused naval installations and a rusting oil rig.

The report, which says that the future for the area lies in tourism, not criminals, will be considered at a planning appeal next Thursday. The prison ship, rechristened HMP Weare, was first spotted on the horizon at 8.30am, an hour after a grey and chilly dawn had given way to a grey and chilly day. About 50 locals strained their eyes and their binoculars as the ship made its slow progress to the dock.

> 'We want to be thought of as a holiday resort, not world's jail capital'

Piggybacked on the top of a rusting barge, named Giant 4, the ship approached one of the three harbour entrances before backing up, turning around and heading for another. By the time the tugs had inched the ship into the harbour, it was three hours behind its proposed 10am arrival time.

Some locals admitted that the ship might bring employment to the area, which has been hit by closure of the naval base in 1995.

Last week saw the last ferry service from the harbour to the Channel Islands. It now runs from Poole, 30 miles up the coast.

But most believed the impact of the prison ship would be negative. "It won't bring any new jobs for local people," said Robin Pearson, owner of the Tea Cosy cafe in the village of Fortuneswell.

"We already have far too many prison officers working on the island and most of them come from miles away."

Portland employs numerous prison officers, who govern the 500 inmates of Verne Prison and the 600 inmates of the Portland Young Offenders Institution, the largest in Europe.

"We want Portland to be thought of as a holiday resort," said Brian Ellis, the mayor. "We don't want to be known as the prison capital of the world."

Although the ship itself does not require planning permission, the Prison Service wants to build onshore storage facilities because of the cramped conditions on board. The council has objected and the matter will be heard at next week's appeal.

"If we could not get permission for storage facilities then we would have to rethink our options," a Prison Service spokesman said.

The local Conservative MP, Ian Bruce, who supports the floating prison, suggested yesterday that another home, possibly Plymouth, could be found before the Prison Service finally commissions the ship in the next few weeks.

The Prison Service plans to incarcerate 480 Category C prisoners on the ship, which looks like a floating power station and cost £4 million to buy from the New York Department of Correction.

Review

An act of theatre without the plot

Michael Billington

Attempts On Her Life
Royal Court Theatre Upstairs

AT one point in Martin Crimp's Attempts On Her Life there is a parody of a solemn Late Review-type arts programme. Theatre, announces one speaker, has died. Gone are "the outmoded conventions of dialogue and so-called characters lumbering towards embarrassing denouements".

It sounds like Crimp's own pre-emptive strike against critics. For his mould-breaking play — described as 17 scenarios for the theatre — itself has no plot, characters or recognisable dialogue.

Instead it offers multiple perspectives in sliced-up prose on the death of a constantly shifting figure called Anne. While I don't buy the thesis that conventional dramatic forms are dead, the piece has a kaleidoscopic vigour that certainly held my attention.

The nearest parallel to Crimp's piece is Time and the Room, by German dramatist Botho Strauss. That, too, has a heroine who constantly shifts her identity and expresses a despair at the emptiness of modern consumerist existence. But Strauss's play at least has living characters, whereas Crimp's is the theatrical equivalent of a Rorschach test.

What one can say for sure is that each scenario focuses on the mysterious Anne, whom we first hear about through a series of messages left on her answering machine. Each of the subsequent scenes seems to focus on a different figure. Was the late Anne an urban terrorist who believed world leaders had destroyed everything in the name of *laissez-faire* capitalism? Or was she perhaps a tourist hostess, heavily into porn, who committed suicide? Or was she an artist who turned her various attempts at death into a gallery exhibit?

My own deduction is that Anne fulfils the same function as the woman on the mortuary slab in Priestley's An Inspector Calls: she is basically a vehicle for the writer's moral rejection of a selfish, materialist civilisation based on consumer-fetishism.

Indeed at one point she literally becomes a vehicle in the shape of a car called the "Anny" which has every modern device, and which, in the salesman's language, has "no room for gypsies, Arabs, Jews, Turks, Kurds, blacks or any of that human scum".

Crimp's play is not easy. But it is driven by a radical contempt for the new global capitalism and its attempt to turn us all into peripatetic, depersonalised consumers.

Even if its target is impossibly large, it is fuelled by genuine passion and is given a visually impressive production by Tim Albery that uses the full depth of the Theatre Upstairs stage.

Albery, his designer Gideon Davey and a multi-cultural cast of eight vividly conjure up a world of aeroplanes, TV studios and public platforms all intended to evoke the hectic sameness of the global village we currently inhabit.

Crimp may have dispensed with plot and characters. But he has proved that the act of theatre can still survive if it is propelled by moral fervour.

This review appeared in some editions yesterday

Five-deck hierarchy in a boilerhouse atmosphere

John Carvel on life for convicts aboard the vessel when it was moored by New York's pier 13

DURING my short time on the prison ship Resolution in the company of 384 American addicts awaiting trial on a variety of more or less violent drug-related offences, conditions were strange but cushier than in the standard British jail.

Inmates who could handle the intensive group therapy they were given to tackle their habits were rewarded with respectful treatment, a clean environment and up to two hours a day in the on-board law library, where they could get legal advice to prepare their defence.

The ship had moved in 1989 to a permanent berth at pier 36 on New York's East River. After service with the Bibby line — and a spell providing dormitory accommodation in Port Stanley for the veterans of Tumbledown and Goose Green at the end of the Falklands war — it was acquired by the New York City Department of Corrections to handle an acute shortage of prison places.

This shortage was the inevitable result of a three-strikes-and-you're-out sentencing policy adopted by the US criminal justice system. Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, is faced with a similar lack of cell space due to his "prison works" policy. The Resolution has seen it all before.

The vessel had five decks and the inmates were moved from the bottom to the top as they made progress with the treatment programme. They were organised in groups of 48, who worked, ate and slept together to create a team spirit.

Security was tight and the atmosphere was like a boilerhouse. The portholes were sealed and the central heating turned up too high. Metal decks echoed to the declamations of inmates trying to convince their therapists, their warders and perhaps themselves that they were turning their backs on the heroin, crack or alcohol addiction which landed them in trouble.

This was 1990, 10 months after the Resolution was turned into a prison ship and long before it was pensioned off as an over-expensive liability.

Prisoners had to volunteer to join the programme. After detoxification in the penal colony on Rikers Island, they agreed to total abstinence (checked by regular urine sampling) and intensive counselling. Within the limits of these rules, the regime was liberal.

During the therapy sessions there was a manic quality about the prisoners' contributions and and the applause which greeted them.

"Good morning, family" said Glen who had been addicted to crack and wine. "My *addiction was not a drug* problem, it was an attitude problem. I'm a two-time felon and so jail is mandatory for me. My parole board will be in two years, and this is my chance of making my first board."

"Good morning, family", said Anthony, a marijuana user. "This programme is about responsibility: like waking up in the morning, keeping your room clean, doing your work, facing reality. It's too much for some of them. If people leave this programme early, they don't want to live."

None of this was made better or worse by taking place on board a ship. Conditions on the Resolution were a lot better than Brixton or Pentonville. The ship was moored firmly by pier 36, and there was hardly a sensation of being afloat.

For New York and for Portland, the Resolution serves as an emblem of a policy of expanding numbers in custody faster than new jails can be built. It raises big issues about the criminal justice system, but it is not a Dickensian hulk. Provided the vessel is still seaworthy, the inmates need not suffer any more than in a jail on dry land.

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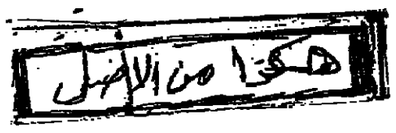


Four senior dealers suspended

NatWest rogue bill soars to £90m

Lisa Buckingham and Julia Finch

FOUR of the most senior dealers in the City were yesterday suspended by the NatWest Bank as it revealed that losses notched up by a junior trader have climbed to £90 million.

The banking giant, which was forced to confess that its system of supervision had failed to pick up the activities of a rogue trader over more than two years, also withdrew £8 million of bonuses which had been promised to a handful of traders in the department under scrutiny.

It is understood that fewer than 10 dealers work on the interest rate options desk, where Kyriacos Papouis, the trader at the centre of the affair, was employed before he quit to join a rival last December 16.

As the real extent of the scandal emerged yesterday, Martin Owen, chief executive of NatWest Markets — the part of the bank at the centre of the fiasco — said he would be giving up £200,000 of his annual bonus. He will, however, retain £300,000 of his 1996 bonus on top of his £300,000 salary.

Concerns have been growing that the huge bonuses on offer in the City are encouraging dealers in complex financial products such as derivatives to take unnecessary risks to keep up their earnings. The Bank of England recently sounded a warning and NatWest said yesterday that a review of its bonus system could follow its current investigations.

The four men suspended by NatWest include Phil Wise, recently promoted to become chief administrative officer in charge of risk. The list also includes Jean-Francois Nguyen, the direct boss of Neil Dodgson, who was suspended two weeks ago when NatWest first disclosed the scandal.

Mr Nguyen is understood to have been awarded a bonus of £3 million in recognition of the contribution his options team made towards profits last year — which would have made him the best paid interest options dealer in the Square Mile.

NatWest has been pouring cash into its high risk investment banking business, unlike some rivals such as Lloyds TSB, which have stuck to the safer high street banking business.

In the past three years, the value of the interest rate options business handled by traders such as Mr Nguyen and Mr Papouis has grown from £4 billion to £10 billion a year, yet it contributes only tiny profits.

NatWest's chief executive, Derek Wanless, yesterday declined to say how much the bank thought it had been earning from this business but he had clearly been worried that the black hole would be so vast that the bank would be forced to rewrite its profit figures for the past two years.

The scandal was discovered only hours after the bank announced profits of £1.2 billion. It emerged yesterday that the bank had been forced to disclose the black hole quickly because of rumours that it was facing losses on a par with the £800 million run up two years earlier by rogue trader Nick Leeson, in a scam which brought Barings bank to its knees.

Mr Wanless was left with no alternative after two weeks of forensic financial investigation, involving teams of top City accountants and lawyers, than to admit that his bank had failed badly. The Bank of England and City watchdogs are being kept informed.

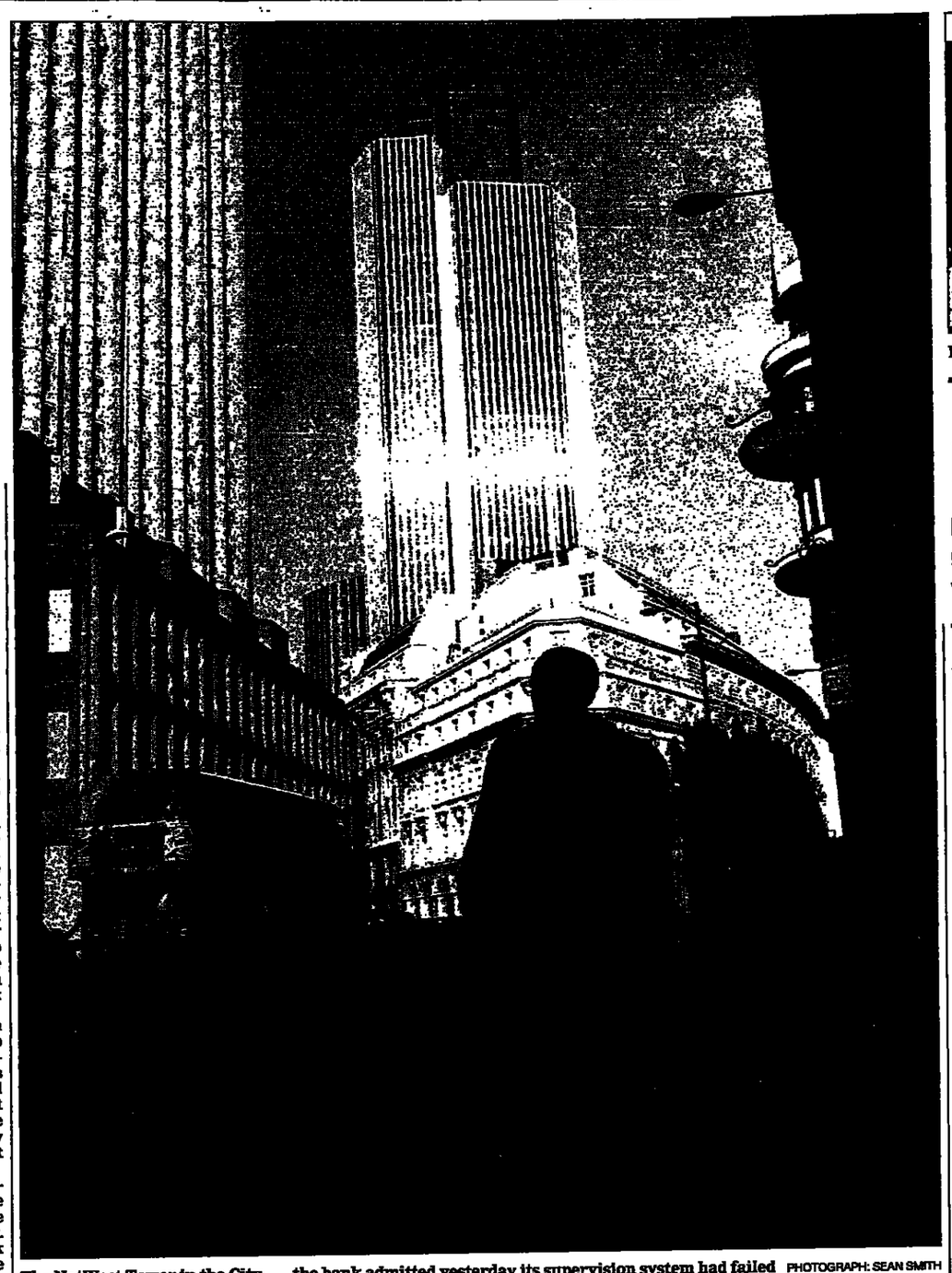
Mr Wanless said: "It is extremely regrettable that the loss and the mis-pricing have gone undetected for so long. This is a significant setback for NatWest Markets. We must continually improve our management and control systems. The lessons learned from this incident are already being put into practice."

The bank is now attempting to pinpoint the failures in its control systems and will attempt to uncover the motives of dealing staff found to be involved in the affair — more of whom could be suspended or sacked. NatWest said there was no evidence of personal gain.

Mr Wanless stressed that suspension did not imply any wrong doing.

Lord Alexander, chairman of the banking group, sought to reassure the market that he would not preside over a whitewash.

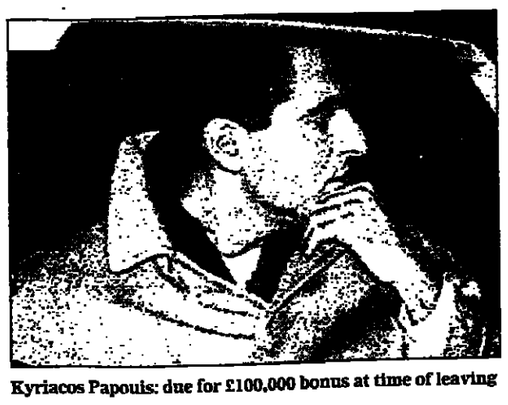
Leader comment, page 8; Emergency controls, and Notebook, page 11



The NatWest Tower in the City . . . the bank admitted yesterday its supervision system had failed PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Banking bungles

- 1996: Deutsche Morgan Grenfell pays £400 million to cover losses from unlisted securities bought by a UK fund manager, Peter Young.
- 1996: Sumitomo trader Tasuo Hamanaka loses it £1.6 billion in copper futures — mostly traded in London.
- 1995 February: NatWest loses £719 million on the sale of its US BankCorp business.
- 1995 February: Barings put into administration after trader Nick Leeson loses £800 million.
- 1992: Barclays writes off £240 million as part of rescue of property company Imry.
- 1992: Standard Chartered makes £270 million provision against losses in India after becoming a victim of £850 million securities scandal.
- 1991 July: BCCI closed down by Bank of England after $4 billion fraud.
- 1987-92: NatWest's handling of £837 million rights issue by Blue Arrow leads to fraud trial, but all convictions quashed on appeal.
- 1989: Midland loses £100 million on interest rates gamble.
- 1987: TSB buys Hill Samuel for £777 million but finds it also acquired £1.8 billion of doubtful loans.
- 1980-1986: Midland spends $1.3 billion on Crocker Bank of US but finds it has taken on $2 billion of third-world bad debt.



Kyriacos Papouis: due for £100,000 bonus at time of leaving

Trader turns to Leeson lawyer

Man in eye of storm remains firmly silent, writes **Julia Finch**

THE junior trader at the heart of the NatWest scandal has hired the lawyer who defended Nick Leeson, the rogue dealer whose activities in Singapore caused the collapse of the 233-year-old Barings Bank two years ago.

Jealously guarding his right to silence, he is now refusing to help the accountants and lawyers trying to untangle the web of trades that produced the bank's £90 million loss.

Kyriacos Papouis, aged 29, has hired Stephen Pollard, a solicitor with Kingsley Napley, who organised Leeson's TV interview with Sir David Frost and handled lucrative book negotiations. Mr Pollard has advised Mr Papouis to keep quiet until he decides it is advantageous for the trader to tell his side of the story.

"We want to interview him," said NatWest's chief executive, Derek Wanless. "But for some reason we haven't been able to."

Mr Wanless stressed that the suspension of four senior employees yesterday did not imply guilt or involvement. But nor was the bank certain its losses were caused by one person.

"We can't confirm it was just Mr Papouis," he said. He refused to say whether the Serious Fraud Office had been called in.

What is now certain is that the losses involved mis-pricing — recording the wrong price for deals — which can make deals look far more profitable than they are.

But NatWest is not yet clear on the reason behind the mis-pricing. "We don't know what the motivations were," Mr Wanless said. Reports that it could have been an attempt to ratchet up profits and earn higher bonuses were dismissed as speculative.

Mr Papouis, who was born and educated in north London, joined NatWest Markets as a graduate trainee from Keele University in October 1991 and worked his way up the ranks, although he was still a relatively junior employee.

He is understood to have been on a salary of around £80,000 at the time he left last December. At that time he was a proprietary trader — gambling with the bank's money — and due to receive a bonus of around £100,000.

He then joined the US securities house Bear Stearns, which is reported to have offered him £300,000 for his first year — £100,000 salary, £100,000 guaranteed bonus and a £100,000 signing-on fee. However, a spokesman for Bear Stearns says it was not the company's policy to offer "golden hellos".

Last week, as his involvement in NatWest's black hole emerged, he was suspended and later from Bear Stearns.

£2bn nuclear subs order

David Fairhall and Chris Barrie

THE Government is poised to risk political outrage in Scotland and a fresh row with Labour by rushing though a pre-election £2 billion order for nuclear-powered submarines from GEC.

Indications that the order is imminent come 24 hours after 1,300 jobs on the Clyde were plunged into doubt when the Govan shipyard failed to win a £200 million order for Royal Navy oil tankers. That order also went to the GEC shipyard of VSEL at Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria.

The submarine order, expected on Monday, will confirm VSEL's status as Britain's leading warship builder and gives GEC Marine, which also owns Yarrow shipyard on the Clyde, a near-monopoly of orders for large warships.

On Wednesday Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, backed by John Major, placed the oil tanker order with VSEL amid accusations that the yard was using its dominant position to undercut rivals.

The order went south of the border despite last-ditch lobbying by Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary. Mr Portillo's decision was attacked by Labour, which called for an inquiry by the National Audit Office into whether VSEL had unfairly lumped together its bids for tankers and submarines.

Last night Stephen Byers, Labour MP for Wallsend which includes the Swan Hunter shipyard, said: "There have been suspicions concerning VSEL's tendering process for a few years now. This might well be a further example of the company bringing together a number of separate contracts in order to tender unrealistically low prices."

The order will be for three Batch 2 Trafalgar class hunter-killer boats. GEC was originally asked to bid for three submarines with the option of building a further two. The Navy says it needs five submarines to maintain a viable fleet, but senior officers will be relieved to have secured three. Labour, which plans a defence review if it wins power, will be faced with the thorny decision of accepting that the submarines will be built, or cancelling them and paying hefty penalty fees that are included in defence contracts.

The news will be welcomed in Barrow where the yard's workload is starting to decline with the completion of HMS Vengeance, the last of the four Trident ballistic missile submarines. The end of this work will coincide with the start-up of the Trafalgar class boats, safeguarding many of the 5,000 jobs there.

Sterile wonder-horse may run on for ever as former owner pursues race of clones

Nick Varley
Sport Correspondent

FIRST it was Dolly the sheep, then talk of hybrid humans. Now cloning is moving into the sport of kings.

The world's most successful horse, Cigar, may be copied scientifically after his more natural exploits at stud — costing $75,000 (£47,000) a time — proved unreproductive.

Cigar once enjoyed a 16-race winning streak and retired having earned almost $10 million. But his former owner, who has the right to buy back the horse if he is sterile, is hoping to recoup some of the $25 million the barren stud career should have netted.

Allen Paulson, an American, said: "We're certainly looking into cloning. There's no life in his sperm at all. They've checked over 20 mares, and all of them are barren. It's a big shock."

But not as big a shock as the possibility of cloning in the racing world. It raises the prospect of Cigar racing for years to come via cloned descendants.

Mr Paulson will next month ask the US Jockey Club for "clarification" of the rules to see whether he might be able to clone his champion.

The Jockey Club in Britain poured scorn on the idea. Worldwide rules prevented such breeding, a spokesman said. "Quite a few barriers would have to come down before cloning became a reality.

"It's highly unlikely . . . if you've got an endless supply of champions, the value of the breeding business would decrease dramatically."

Hamish Anderson, a director of Weatherbys, the business which controls British and Irish breeding, said: "In the meat and livestock business uniformity might be an advantage, but in racing variation is vital."

Harry Griffin, one of the team from Roslin Institute, near Edinburgh, which cloned Dolly the sheep, said: "Whether [the technique is] transferable to other species we don't know yet, and our first efforts will probably be with cattle and pigs."

But one group refusing to rule out science's forward gallop was the bookmakers. A spokesman for William Hill would not give odds on a clone of Cigar winning races or even existing. And all because in 1962 one man wagered £10 at 1,000-1 on another scientific breakthrough occurring: seven years later, when a man did indeed walk on the moon, the punter collected £10,000.

William Hill said: "We won't get bitten twice."

Thatcher gives Blair blessing

continued from page one

of the Commons, Tony Newton, kept MPs guessing when he announced Commons business for next week in the House. After outlining business until Monday March 24, he told MPs: "I am not yet in a position to make a definitive statement about recess dates."

Yet the Lords heard of business plans until March 27. In reality there are several bills that will be in the legislative chain until at least then, and Mr Major will have to lose them and blame "irresponsible" opponents, or negotiate a deal with Labour and the Lib Dems, or bring MPs and peers back for at least one day after Easter, probably April 2.

That would leave him free to seek a royal dissolution of parliament and launch the formal campaign, with manifesto publications, probably on April 7 or 8.

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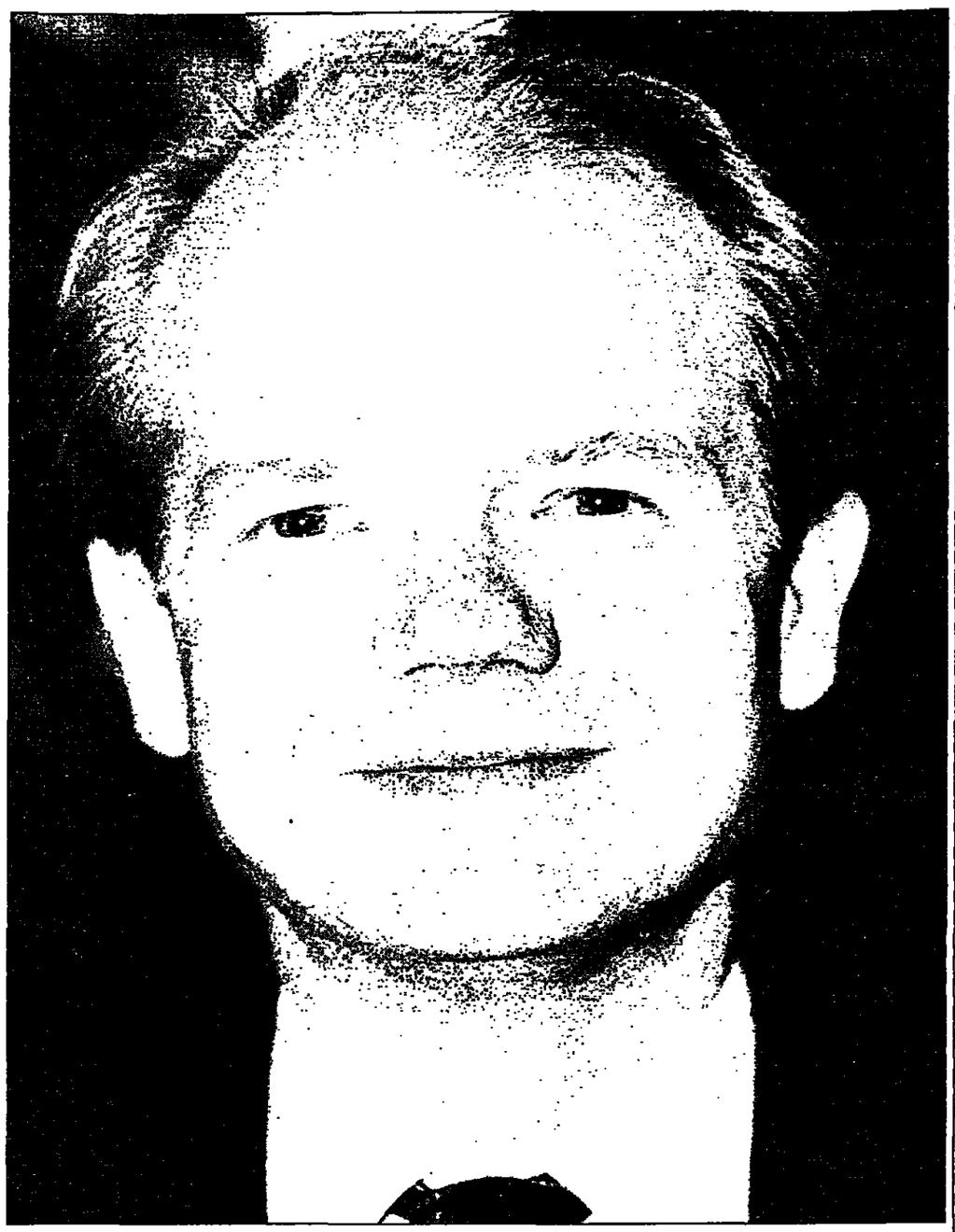
THE CONTENDERS: Since William Hague at the age of 16 told Mrs Thatcher how to run the country at the Tory conference in 1977, he has forged his way onward and ever upward along the path to power. He is the embodiment of the professional, power seeking parliamentarian, reports **Derek Brown**

Rise and rise of Boy Blue



William Hague . . . likeable with a remarkable knack of making other people believe in his ability to succeed

ON the wall of the Conservative agent's office in Northallerton are photographs of the last four members for the Richmond division, one of the biggest and best — from a Tory point of view — in all England.

Those photographs vividly illustrate the changing nature of Parliament itself, and of the Conservative Party in particular.

The first is of Tommy Dugdale, later Baron Crathorne, MP from 1929 to 1959, landowner and toff; a man so resolutely oldfangled in his notion of public duty that he actually resigned office on a point of principle.

When he was minister of agriculture in 1954, some of his officials were harshly criticised for their role in the Crichel Down land scandal, and he, entirely innocent of knowledge let alone wrongdoing, took the rap.

The second photograph is of Sir Timothy Kitson, MP from 1959 to 1983, farmer and gent, who was parliamentary secretary to the prime minister, Edward Heath, from 1970 to 1974. Later, by sticking loyally to his man, he incurred the wrath of the new management.

The third is of Sir Leon Brittan, brainy barrister, minister of the Crown, and now European commissioner; in his day, one of the shooting stars of the government.

As MP for Richmond from 1983 to 1988, he personified *not only the party's lurch to* the right, but its new breed of thrusting career politicians.

The fourth photograph is of the current incumbent: William Hague, the very embodiment of the professional, power-seeking parliamentarian.

There is about him no trace of the aristo, the squire, nor even the self-made man come to his reward in the House. Being an MP, a minister, and now a secretary of state, is simply what William Hague was destined to be: not by a superior power, or by a patron, but by his own will. There may have been some luck involved, but somehow it seems unlikely.

For almost exactly 20 years, he has forged his way onward and ever upward along the very public way which leads to power, and which may yet take him to Downing Street. And he is still only just past his mid-30s.

Scary? Not at all, say those who know the man. And most *who do, seem to like him. One* of the party's shrewdest old hands said: "He's a nice chap, a very good parliamentarian who mixes well and listens well; a bright lad, and an absolute politician who loves his job."

Even the less generous assessments from his peers include an almost inevitable recognition that the man will continue to rise. Another former minister said: "He'll be in the frame in the next leadership election, no doubt about it. It may only be a marker for the contest after that, but he'll be there. As far as I can tell there isn't a single opinion in his head, but he's a likeable man, very self-deprecating."

This quality of likeableness

He has no trace of the aristo, the squire

has become a sort of Hague convention: a common thread of interviews and profiles dating back to his exhilarating, excruciating, debut at the party conference in 1977.

I was there on that less than historic occasion, when the fresh-faced lad from Wath upon Dearne, 16 going on 57, rose to address the faithful. Young people, he announced gravely, wanted change. "They do not want to go to Callaghan's promised land, which must surely rank as the most miserable and abhorrent land that has ever been promised to the people of a nation.

"But most of all they want to be free from the government, the government that they think should get out of *the way, not interfere in their* lives, and I trust that Mrs Thatcher's government will indeed get out of the way ... Half of you may not be here in 30 or 40 years time, but I will be and I want to be free ... If we should fail now to reverse the progress of socialism, we can write off the future of this party and the country. But if we rise to the challenge and if we determine to roll back the frontier of the state, we will not only capture the imagination and support of the younger people, we will save free enterprise and Great Britain, and create a capital-owning, home-owning democracy for the young people."

Opinion on the press table was divided. We had just listened either to a extremely embarrassing young prat, or to an extremely newsworthy young prat. But these things take different folk in different ways, and the conference loved it, especially the bit about rolling back the frontier of the state, a gag which *had only been used a couple* of dozen times already that week.

So did the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, even though she had just been told how to do her job. "We are standing here with possibly another young Mr Pitt," Mrs Thatcher told the TV cameras. That did it.

"Do you think you will end up as PM?" asked the Daily Mail's Peter Greig. "Perhaps," said Master Hague. "William the Conqueror", was the Daily Express headline. "Maggie's Bionic Babe", announced the Sun. "William Squitt, 16", was Private Eye's *later* description.

But for all the smirking condescension of the coverage, both foul and fair, the young Hague was seen as *likeable*. One writer grudgingly noted that he was "probably a nice enough boy in his own singularly dreadful way". And so it went on.

The following year, on the anniversary of That Speech, the Guardian's Patrick Barclay recorded the lad's distinct lack of laddishness: his hobbies of listening to Iain Macleod speeches and reading Hansard; his habit of quoting Churchill and Goethe, and his formidable debating style (which, for its slightly Churchillian quaver, earned him the school nickname of Larry the Lamb). He noted that for all the teenage Hague's fogeyness, "he remains vulnerable enough to like".

This is the other remarkably consistent feature of Hague's seemingly unstoppable rise: he makes other people believe in his ability to succeed. Indeed, he makes it seem almost inevitable.

After the glare of the conference lights, the young Harold Wilson soundalike retreated into the penumbra *of publicity. He appeared on* Any Questions, worked diligently for that quixotic group, the Rother Valley Young Conservatives, added four excellent A levels to his nine excellent O levels, got to Magdalen College, became president of the Oxford Union, and picked up a first class degree.

By the time he was 21, still going on 57, he was a speech writer and policy adviser to Geoffrey Howe, at 11 Downing Street.

He stood for Parliament in his home territory of Wentworth in 1987, losing to Labour by some 20,000 votes, and did some political work for Leon Brittan, which no doubt helped when the latter was packed off to Brussels in 1988.

Hague, by now having ripened to 27, put in for the succession, along with 362 other applicants. He wowed the association, as he had wowed the conference 12 years earlier. He would, he announced, be a full-time MP: "A drop in salary doesn't bother me."

The February 1989 byelection could have wiped out the man once called Wonder Boy Blue. Defending a majority of more than 19,500, he scraped in by 2,634, and only won because the Lib Dems and SDP both put up candidates.

Still, he remains the last Tory to have won a byelection and, as he typically remarked at the time: "There's no such thing as a disappointing victory."

In the next general election, the natural order of things in Richmond was restored, with Hague winning by 23,504 votes. By then, he had already got a substantial foot on the ladder of advancement, as parliamentary private secretary to Norman Lamont at the Treasury. After the 1992 victory of John Major, whom he had supported in the 1990 leadership election, his progress was more speedy: social security junior minister, 1993; minister of state, 1994; Secretary of State for Wales, 1995.

When he was elevated, at 34, Hague became the youngest cabinet minister since Harold Wilson in 1947. Once again, he modestly sidestepped all suggestions of further advance. As he always says, it would be foolish to map out a political career. As he never says, it is best to leave that to others.

For the moment, Hague clearly enjoys his job in Wales, rather more, it seems, than did his predecessor, John Redwood. At the start, he was seen as another Englishman foisted on the country. But since then he has picked up a few words of Welsh, *learned the national* anthem, and assiduously toured the principality.

Hague is undoubtedly on the right of the party. He takes profound satisfaction in the ascendancy of rightist values since 1979, and he shares some of the more basic instincts of the kind of Tory who cheered him to the echo back in '77. He unwaveringly supports capital punishment, for example.

'There isn't a single opinion in his head'

But, intriguingly, he defies narrow ideological definition. He has cannily avoided joining backbench and other internal party groups. He has studiously steered clear of the strident tendency in the Euro debate, although he has never denied being broadly sceptic.

As Welsh Secretary, he will have a key national role in the election campaign in countering Labour's devolution ideas. He is a proven crowd-pleaser, an assured broadcasting performer, and a skilled parliamentary operator — the quality which, more than any other, will commend itself to a party looking for a leader in opposition.

For more than half his life, Hague has had to bear the burden of that "young Mr Pitt" tag from 1977. He has been called "the next prime minister but 14" (the late Sir Hugh Fraser), "the next prime minister but two" (the Sunday Times), and "the next prime minister but one" (almost anyone with an opinion).

If the Tories lose the election, they will be looking for a leader who will not alienate chunks of the party; who will lead from the front in the Commons, and who will have

He is Euro-sceptic but not in a loud way

time on his or her side. Hague, say the doubters, may have all these qualities, but is not ready for leadership. They said the same about the dark horse candidate in 1990 — John Major.

News in brief

Drugs gang gets 126 years jail

A DRUGS gang whose high seas smuggling operation ended in the death of a customs officer was yesterday sentenced to a total of 126 years in jail. Roderick McLean, a 55-year-old Edinburgh shopkeeper was given 28 years for his admitted role in attempting to infiltrate £10 million of cannabis into Scotland via a Spanish ketch and a converted lifeboat. His son, Roderick McLean, jnr, 31, was sentenced to 12 years for his role in a scheme which the High Court in Edinburgh heard would have netted "astronomical" profits.

Dutchman Jan van Rijs, 52, and his son, Ronny, 29, were sentenced to 14 and 10 years respectively by Lord Dawson.

Jan van Rij's nephew, Hendrick, who helped crew the Spanish vessel which brought the drug to a rendezvous point 90 miles off the Caithness coast, received 10 years. Another Dutchman, Liluwe Hoekstra, caught aboard the 60-feet ketch Isolde, was sentenced to 14 years, as was Brian Silverman, a Londoner alleged to have financed the deal.

Customs officer Alastair Soutar was killed last July, in the chaos that followed an attempt by McLean senior and Gary Hunter, also from Edinburgh, to scuttle the Scottish link in the smuggling chain. Hunter, aged 34, received 24 years for his part in setting fire to the Ocean Jubilee, the former lifeboat which McLean bought for £29,000.

Diane Stagg jailed for assault

DIANE STAGG, whose husband, Colin, was cleared of the killing of Rachel Nickell on Wimbledon Common in south London, was yesterday jailed for two months after admitting assaulting two police officers. Stagg, 28, admitted lashing out at the officers during a fracas outside her south London flat.

Her lawyers were due back in court today to apply for bail, pending appeal.

Soldier hurt in terror attack

A SOLDIER of the 2nd Battalion Royal Tank Regiment was slightly injured when an improvised grenade struck the side of his Land-Rover on a security force patrol in the Ardoyne area of republican north Belfast yesterday. The force of the blast blew an armoured panel off the side of the vehicle.

Fears for Briton in Cambodia

UNCERTAINTY over the fate of British mine clearance expert *Christopher Howes*, held by Cambodia's Khmer Rouge for almost a year, deepened yesterday when co-premier Hun Sen said military intelligence had reported that Mr Howes had been killed. He said there was only a chance in a million that the 35-year-old from Bristol was still alive. — *Nick Cumming-Bruce*

Emma Freear

Samantha Brearley

Clair Jennings

Jocelyn Bancroft

School mourns 'brightest and best' after crash

Four sixth formers destined for university die on lunchtime jaunt

Martin Wainwright

A SCHOOL was left in mourning yesterday by the sudden loss of four of its "brightest and best" sixth formers in a horrific lunch-break accident on a quiet country lane.

A special assembly was held at Harrogate grammar school, one of the country's most successful comprehensives, for the four "inseparable" friends who died when a Peugeot 106 caught fire and exploded after leaving the road and hitting a tree in the Yorkshire Dales.

Samantha Brearley, aged 18, was driving. With her were Jocelyn Bancroft, aged 17, Emma Freear, aged 18, and Clair Jennings, also 18. All four had been offered university places.

The head teacher, Kevin McAleese, said: "We are facing the greatest tragedy ever in the school's history, trying to cope with the loss of four of our brightest and best students — students who had given a great deal to the school."

Counselling has been offered to the girls' friends among the 410 sixth formers, and Harrogate Grammar is also contacting A-level boards about the possible effect of the tragedy on other pupils sitting the exam this summer.

A range of school projects, including a sponsored "stay-awake" for charity this week, have been cancelled as a mark of respect, and plans for a memorial are under discussion.

Accident investigators are trying to establish why the car went out of control on Norwood Lane, three miles from the school, as the girls returned from a pub lunch where they had played pool and had soft drinks. Joan Beecroft, landlady of the Sun Inn at Norwood Edge, a popular beauty spot, on the eastern rim of the Dales, said the group had been "really nice, considerate and polite", and regulars were stunned by their deaths.

North Yorkshire police said that no other vehicles had been involved in the crash. Samantha's parents described her as a careful and reliable driver. Her mother, Janet Brearley, said that the red Peugeot had been bought for her daughter on her passing her driving test, and for the couple's son, Ben, who has yet to pass.

She said: "I still can't believe what has happened to my little girl. I can only put it down to a freak occurrence which cannot be explained."

Emma's father, Stephen Freear, said that the four were best friends and planned to holiday together in Tenerife after A levels. "Emma had everything to live for. She was doing A-levels in theatre studies, history, and English, and had won a place to do theatre and media studies at Glasgow university. She was looking forward to a career in the theatre."

Jocelyn Bancroft, who was due to go to Humberside university, was described by her family as "a very, very clever girl who had such a bright future ahead of her".

Clair Jennings had appeared in Harrogate Operatic Society's performance of Me and My Girl last week, and had been due to sing at a concert in the town tonight.

Twelve sixth formers had visited the Sun Inn for lunch. Two carloads who left before *the girls, re-traced their route* when their friends failed to arrive at school, and discovered the accident

The school was one of 32 given "outstanding" status last year, with 80 per cent of sixth formers going on to university. Mr McAleese said that the practice of allowing sixth formers to drive off for lunch would be reviewed, but the school's initial feeling was that it was not to blame. "The accident could have happened in school hours or out of school hours, and therefore there is no reason to believe that any school procedure should be changed".

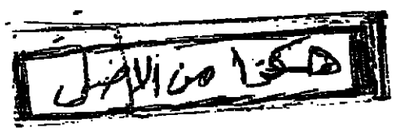
The girls' head of year, Ken Weston, said most upper sixth-formers were coping well, but added: "The mood is very sombre. They get a lot of help from each other, but there is a lot of grief about."

● Parents whose children use a main road where two young sisters were killed said yesterday that it was a death trap. Candice Cargill, aged 12, and her sister, Kimberley, aged nine, died from their injuries after they were hit by a Ford Sierra on the A41 near their home in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, on Wednesday night. Janet Kelwick, a governor at Meadowcroft school, where Kimberley was a pupil, said that although there were parks, a playing area, a doctor's surgery, a school and a play school by the road, the speed limit was 60 mph.

"There is a sign saying 'Welcome to Aylesbury'. But it does not tell you to slow down until you are well into the town. The speed limit is still 60 mph, and does not slow down to 40 mph until the nearby roundabout.

"Cars just fly down there.It takes something like this for people to start doing something. How many more people are going to have to go through this before something is done?"

Another mother, Michele Gately, said she had even seen a car travelling at 90 mph as it entered the town, and that the road needed a crossing. She said: "Kimberley was a lovely little girl. She was very bubbly."



Gay sailor allowed to seek ruling in Euro-court over forces ban

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

A FORMER serviceman sacked for being gay won a key victory yesterday in his fight to have Britain's ban on homosexuals in the armed forces declared unlawful.

A high court judge agreed to send Terry Perkins's case to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg for a ruling on whether Britain is breaching European equality laws by banning gays from the services.

Legal experts believe the former Royal Navy leading medical assistant stands a good chance of success, following a recent Luxembourg judgment that a European directive on equal treatment for men and women at work protects transsexuals from discrimination.

If Mr Perkins succeeds in Luxembourg, it could open the way for compensation claims in excess of the £60 million paid to ex-servicewomen unlawfully dismissed for becoming pregnant. Hundreds of gay men and women have been dismissed from the services in the last 20 years because of their sexual orientation.

The Ministry of Defence has admitted in a leaked report: "The worst case scenario is a legal liability to compensation for all homosexuals discharged on grounds of homosexual orientation alone since 1978."

Giving his reasons for referring the case to Europe, Mr Justice Lightman said the prospects of the European Court upholding Mr Perkins's case were "significant" and justified the reference there.

"If transsexuals, even before and without any gender reassignment operation, are entitled to protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, it is difficult to see how such protection can be withheld from those of homosexual orientation generally," he said.

The whole social policy reasoning in the transsexuals case "seems to me equally applicable to homosexuals," he added.

"It may well be thought appropriate that the fundamental principle of equality and the irrelevance of a person's sex and sexual identity demand that the court be alert to afford protection to them and ensure that those of homosexual orientation are no longer disadvantaged in terms of employment, save and unless the discrimination is justified."

Mr Perkins, 28, was based at the Royal Navy hospital, Gosport, Hampshire, until his discharge in November 1996 after nearly five years exemplary service. He now lives in Nottingham with his partner and works as a consultant with a computer company.

Stephen Grosz, solicitor for Mr Perkins, described the ruling as "another step towards the death of the armed services' blanket ban on gays and lesbians serving their country". He said it would probably take about 18 months for the European Court to give a ruling.

Around 50 other cases are in the pipeline. Duncan Lustig-Prean, chairman of Rank Outsiders, the gay servicemen's campaigning group, said he was delighted "that the judge has so clearly expressed the view that the [blanket ban] is likely to be considered unlawful in Europe".

Discharges under the policy are running at more than 100 a year, the organisation believes.

Mr Justice Lightman said Mr Perkins was sacked in pursuance of a policy, without any exception or qualification, to discharge anyone of homosexual orientation.

The MoD said after the ruling that it continued to believe that the European Equal Treatment Directive applied only to discrimination against men and women on grounds of gender and not sexual orientation.

It added: "We may also argue that the exclusion of homosexuals from the armed forces is purely for the reason of combat effectiveness and incompatibility and that such key defence decisions are outside the scope of the EC treaty from which the directive derives and also outside the scope of the European Court of Justice."

Armed forces minister Nicholas Soames vowed to fight the case "to the end". Labour has said that if elected it will lift the ban, which has been removed in most other countries.

Everyone's a bigot about something or other, insist Tory voters caught on camera

Luke Harding

BILL, Henry, and George stared glumly into their pints. "If we didn't have a sense of humour, we would be digging our graves," George said. "We are not very happy."

Three days ago, nobody had heard of George. By yesterday the middle-aged publican from the Suffolk village of Framlingham — and seven of his Tory-voting friends — were adjusting to celebrity and its cruel, accusing glare. The group agreed to be filmed by a documentary maker, Paul Watson, at a dinner party. Over prawn St Jacques, their unexpurgated views on beggars, the poor, and homosexuals, were recorded on camera. On Wednesday, Channel 4, which is screening the documentary later this month, leaked its contents to the press.

Yesterday their decision to take part was looking like a bit of a mistake. Even the Daily Telegraph described their views as bigoted. What to do? After breakfast and a restorative brandy, Bill, Henry, and George repaired to George's pub, the Railway Inn, to drown their sorrows. "The other five are devastated. They don't want to know about it," said George. "We are reasonably intelligent people — we are deep thinking people. The way it has been portrayed is that we are a shallow lot of public school shits."

The three were identified in the programme, The Dinner Party, only by their first names. Yesterday they turned out to be Henry Erskine-Hill, aged 44, an old Etonian and second son of a baronet, and manager of a local petrol station; George Coleman, aged 50, publican; and Bill Vaudrey, aged 41, currently unemployed.

Henry appears in the programme extolling the benefits of a "benevolent dictator", George calls for curbs on immigration, and Bill discourses on the virtues of greed. They had been manipulated, misquoted, and misrepresented, they said, and were consulting a solicitor. And Henry voted for the Natural Law Party at the last election, not the Conservatives. Are they bigots? "Everybody who is a human being is bigoted about something or other," George said.

A spokeswoman for Granada, which made the 50-minute Cutting Edge documentary, denied the eight had been "stitched up". "They have not seen the film yet," she added.

Harriers salute pioneering pilot who helped develop the jump jet

RAF Harriers soar above the steeple of St Clement Danes, London (above), in a salute to Bill Bedford (left), the test pilot who pioneered Britain's vertical take-off plane. Yesterday's flypast formed the climax of his memorial service at the RAF church.

A man of gentle, self-effacing charm, Bill Bedford flew Hurricanes, Thunderbolts and Mustangs during the second world war before becoming Hawker's chief test pilot. The "jump jet" system of vertical take-off and landing he helped develop — based on swivelling engine exhausts and wing-tip balancing — was so successful that even the Americans gave up trying to match it and bought the British technology instead. — *David Fairhall*

PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Law firm sends bill for £12,278 after suicide

Gary Younge

THE mother of a solicitor who killed himself due to pressure of work has been sent a bill for £12,278.16, plus VAT, by the firm that employed him for 10 years.

James Beauchamp Solicitors said they spent nine hours at £150 an hour going to the home of Christopher Bryant, aged 54, when he failed to turn up for work, calling the police to break in, and discovering his body.

The firm, based in Edgbaston, Birmingham, then charged his widowed mother, Irene Brierley, £150 for telling her that her workaholic son was dead. Then came another £300 for identifying the body at a mortuary and giving a statement to police.

Other charges included £5,800 for writing and receiving letters concerning Mr Bryant, a property solicitor, who was found hanged in his home in Bearwood, Birmingham by a colleague on November 18, 1994.

An inquest heard that he was dedicated to his job but had committed suicide due to the pressures of work. At the inquest Mr Bryant — who earned a first-class law degree at Oxford University — was described as a "workaholic".

Mrs Brierley, 80, of Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, received the initial invoice in November last year. "Of course I am angry," she said yesterday. Of course I did not pay the bill, I am not going to pay that. It was a terrible thing that that man did. I hope he will feel embarrassed now it has come out."

His sister, Melanie Weerdmeester, 45, said: "Out of all the items in that bill, charging £150 to knock on my mother's door and tell her her son was dead is to me the most terrible."

"He loved the law, that was his life. Unfortunately that's what happened, he was a workaholic who lived and breathed it." She described the bill as preposterous.

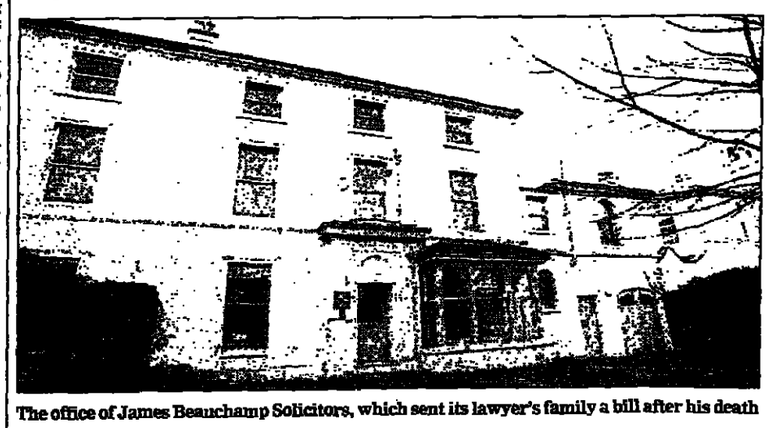
The family refused to pay the bill and made an official complaint to the profession's watchdog, the Office of Supervision of Solicitors. The firm then agreed to reduce the bill to £2,412 plus VAT.

James Beauchamp solicitors yesterday rejected any suggestions that the firm had acted in an improper way in dealing with Christopher Bryant's family.

Senior partner David Waterhouse said: "With regard to the reports that have today been made in the media James Beauchamp Solicitors reject any suggestion that they acted in an improper way in respect of the death of a highly regarded and valued employee, and the administration of his estate. "However, in view of the distress of Christopher's family the outstanding payment from his estate will not be sought."

A spokesman for Harfield-Pickering of Redditch, Hereford and Worcester — the firm handling Mr Bryant's estate — confirmed that the bill had been reduced. "The matter has been settled up on agreed terms with James Beauchamp."

Christopher Bryant during a rare moment of relaxation from his 'workaholic's' routine



The office of James Beauchamp Solicitors, which sent its lawyer's family a bill after his death

Extracts from law firm's bill

TO OUR professional charges in connections with the affairs of Mr Bryant who until the time of his death worked for this practice including attending Mr Bryant's home in Bearwood when he failed to attend work and, being concerned as to this, communicating with the police, after considerable delays the police forced an entry and Mr Bryant's body was discovered who appeared to have taken his own life by hanging
9 hours at £150 per hour . . . £1,350

THEREAFTER the following day after discussing matters with the police attending at the home of Mrs Brierley (Mr Bryant's mother) at Henley-in-Arden to advise her of his sudden death and receiving basic instructions from her
1 hour . . . £150

FURTHER attending at Mr Bryant's home to secure and checking for personal items that Mrs Brierley wished to take custody of
2 hours . . . £300

CORRESPONDENCE:
172 letters out @ £3.50 each & 10 minutes duration each
. . . £4,902.50
64 letter received @ £1.50 each & 5 minutes duration each
. . . £897

Court ends the net book agreement

Dan Glaister
Arts Correspondent

ECONOMIC logic defeated literary sentiment yesterday when the net book agreement was finally put out of its death agony.

The Restrictive Practices Court ruled in favour of a petition by the Director General of Fair Trading to formally put an end to the agreement, which was suspended in September, 1995, with the growth of discounting by large publishers and booksellers.

The court agreed that the 96-year-old agreement restricted the ability of booksellers to meet demand by imposing limits on price flexibility. The director general, John Bridgeman, also argued that it prevented booksellers from disposing of slow-moving stock by offering titles at reduced prices.

The court said that the claims were expressed in terms of an economic proposition "with whose logic it is difficult to quarrel".

The action had been opposed by the independent publisher, John Calder, and Jenny Glayzer, of the National Acquisitions Group, which is concerned with the supply of materials to the library sector.

Mr Calder said yesterday: "It is very disappointing. The next year is going to be disastrous for the book trade.

"Every week about 12 bookshops are going out of business because the supermarkets are discounting titles. The same thing happened in France in 1979 and two thirds of the bookshops went out of business. Within two years they had to introduce emergency legislation to protect the trade."

There were now three options for those who wished to retain a net book agreement: raising funds for an appeal, lobbying the next Parliament, or bringing together interested parties to set up a new agreement.

Mr Calder, who called the playwright, Tom Stoppard, the journalist, Auberon Waugh, and Sir David Steel in defence of the agreement, had argued in court that its demise had also led to a decline in quality and a rise in prices. The amount of money spent on books in 1996 was five per cent less than the previous year.

He added yesterday that bookshops which were facing pressure to reduce overheads were "getting rid of experienced staff and taking on young staff. All you have to do is show them how to use a computer. They don't need to know anything about books."

In January Mr Stoppard had praised independent bookshops, telling the court: "The independent bookshop is very congenial. It is a part of life which one might consider civilised. It is a very good thing to live in a world where there are bookshop assistants who like books, rather than a world where assistants don't care whether they are selling books or cornflakes."

Primary pupils go barefoot for kicks

PUPILS at Cheynes Infants School in Luton, Bedfordshire, are being made to walk barefoot if they kick other children. The punishment introduced by teachers is backed by governors.

Staff at the school refused yesterday to discuss the punishment. A spokeswoman said she was answering "no comment to every question", and the headmistress, Maureen Fitzgerald, was said to be unavailable.

Mrs Fitzgerald has told education chiefs at Bedfordshire county council that more parents support her policy than oppose it.

But some parents are unhappy about the idea, and officials are concerned. They fear the council might be sued if a child hurt a foot as a result of being made to go barefoot.

It is also feared that a teacher might be technically committing assault by forcibly removing a child's shoes and socks.

The school's policy on "rewards and sanctions" says children who kick other pupils should go barefoot for the rest of the school day while they are indoors.

Governors are due to discuss the punishment again next month and Mrs Fitzgerald has written to parents.

It is the second time in recent weeks that punishment methods in Luton primary schools has come under the spotlight. Last month a teacher at Tennyson Road school resigned after being censured for allowing a five-year-old boy to smack bullying classmates with a ruler.

King's Cross tube fire victim tells court of his 'unbearable life'

Alex Bellos

THE most badly burned survivor of the King's Cross underground fire yesterday began giving evidence in his High Court battle for more than £1 million in damages.

Kwasi Minta, aged 43, claims his injuries from the tragedy in 1987 ended his musical career and ruined his life. His face was so badly burnt that he wore a mask for a year and, after 25 operations, he still cannot close one eye, form an "O" with his mouth or use his hands properly.

London Regional Transport admitted liability shortly after the fire, which killed 31 people leaving the Piccadilly line escalator. It has already paid out £4.5 million for 110 claims involving death, injury and property damage.

All the other survivors have settled their claims. But Mr Minta, a Ghanaian, wants greater compensation than LRT has offered because he says he cannot face the world with his scarred face and hands and continuing pain.

The court heard that his legal aid has been "discharged" and he is representing himself with the help of his accountant and a music expert from Ghana.

Under cross-examination Mr Minta, of Putney, south-west London, admitted that he was an illegal immigrant who had come to Britain in 1985 with a one month visa. He never left.

Mr Justice Toulson heard that Mr Minta's family ran the most succesful music business in Ghana and he had come to London to enhance recordings with "more sophisticated techniques.".

He fell on hard times when contacts in Ghana were unable to pay for his work.

The amount that LRT has already offered cannot be disclosed because the judge must make an independent decision on the damages award without any knowledge of the proposed payment. If he awards less than the LRT offer Mr Minta would risk having to pay the costs of the hearing.

Celebrating miners end picketing in Bonn as compromise deal averts mass layoffs

King Kohl caves in on coal jobs

Cologne miners applaud the deal yesterday which means only one pit will close by the year 2000 PHOTOGRAPH: PETER BLICK

Ian Traynor in Berlin

THOUSANDS of German miners roared through Bonn on motorcycles in celebration yesterday after the government retreated from a scheme to slash jobs and coal subsidies.

A compromise deal negotiated between the chancellor, Helmut Kohl, and the miners' union leader, Hans Berger, defused a week of furious protest by the country's 90,000 miners. They returned to their homes and pits in the north-western Ruhr region and the Saarland on the French border after days of picketing government and political party offices in Bonn.

Mr Kohl, who cancelled talks with the union earlier this week because the miners were besieging his offices and paralysing Bonn, stuck to his plan to cut subsidies to the industry by more than half over the next eight years. But the phasing of the cuts has been changed to leave the *subvention largely intact* until the end of the century.

Miners' leaders said the original plan, unveiled a week ago, would have closed 10 of Germany's 19 pits and cost more than 100,000 jobs in the mines and related industries.

Now only one pit will be closed by the end of the century. Although half the mining jobs will ultimately go, they will be pared away through early retirement and retraining schemes.

"The fight was worth it," Mr Berger said after a tense week that saw the angriest demonstrations yet against Mr Kohl's policies of spending cuts and welfare reform, being hastily enacted as the government struggles to qualify for the single European currency.

Friedrich Bohl, the head of Mr Kohl's chancellery, said: "We have ensured the survival of the industry in a way that is economically acceptable."

The success of the miners in forcing the government to shift its position could embolden others to take to the streets, amid record unemployment of 4.7 million.

The centre of Berlin was severely disrupted for the fourth consecutive day by thousands of striking building workers protesting at mass unemployment.

They occupied the city centre's Potsdamer Platz, Europe's biggest building site, in protest at half a million jobless in the construction sector and against the influx of cheaper foreign — and often illegal — labour.

The government climbdown on the miners capped an unhappy week for the chancellor. He abruptly announced the subsidy-cutting plan last Friday — a day after the jobless figures were announced — and promptly triggered an opposition walkout from negotiations on his tax reform proposals. He then miscalculated tactically by calling off the talks with the miners' union before meeting some of its demands.

EU official pours cold water on plan to save fish

Paul Brown in Bergen

ATTEMPTS by environment and fisheries ministers from 13 countries to reach agreements to save the North Sea fishing industry were scuppered yesterday by the European Union.

Minutes before the start of the two-day meeting in Bergen, Norway, the European fisheries commissioner, Emma Bonino, confirmed she had vetoed use of the word "agree" by ministers.

The EU, not North Sea states, had jurisdiction over North Sea fisheries, she said. North Sea states had "no status on their own to agree to anything" and the European Commission would not recognise any document that used the word agree.

Her intervention enraged scientists and green groups. The Bergen talks, the first joint meeting of North Sea environment and fisheries ministries, were called because of the failure of the EU's common fisheries policy to save fish stocks. Norway, which has taken severe measures to save herring and cod in its waters, has been trying to get the EU to adopt similar measures in jointly fished waters.

It is illegal to carry on fishing in Norwegian waters if more than 15 per cent of the catch is undersized, and discarding dead fish is also banned. In the EU-controlled North Sea, up to 50 per cent of fish are thrown back dead because they are deemed to be of uncommercial size or the wrong species.

Karl Schjott-Pedersen, the Norwegian fisheries minister, said: "If you use the political will and the political muscle to do what you have to do, then you can save the fisheries. You have to take very hard actions, which are very difficult to explain to people in fishing communities. But when this is over you are in a much better position economically."

He was scathing about the commission's intervention. Attempts to ban beam trawlers, which damage the sea bottom, and to create sanctuaries for young fish to develop, had been reduced by the EU to the level of recommendations, he said.

"I would prefer to see specific timetables and conclusions in this document. I am unable to understand why EU ministers cannot use the word agree. Are they saying they do not agree? It does not make sense."

Phil Rothwell, of Bird Life International, said the row reminded him of the story about a policemen and a fireman fighting over who should rescue a drowning child. "By the time they had decided, the child was dead."

John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, who proposed the Bergen conference two years ago, was optimistic yesterday that something could be salvaged.

"We have not come here to argue about legal niceties, we have come to agree," he told fellow ministers. "I do not care what words we use to satisfy the lawyers.

"If we cannot use the word agree, then we will use another. We must find some solutions to the problems of over-fishing and unsustainable industrial fishing."

Britain bars Albanian rebel for having 'tatty' passport

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

AN Albanian dissident who urgently wants to travel to Britain to raise awareness about the situation in his country claims Foreign Office officials are putting up spurious bureaucratic hurdles to keep him out.

Edi Rama, a 33-year-old artist who a week ago applied for a visa at the British consulate in Paris, says he was turned down by an official who insisted his passport was "suspiciously tatty".

Mr Rama, one of the leaders of the 1991 Albanian student revolt and a critic of the present regime, has been invited to spend two weeks in London by the George Soros Foundation — a worldwide pro-democracy movement named after the Hungarian-born philanthropist.

Bill McAlister, a former director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts and a member of the Soros Foundation board, said: "Mr Rama is one of few people who can provide an independent view of the situation in Albania.

"He was there less than a month ago and was forced to flee after being attacked by the secret police. We need him to come to London so he can speak to the media."

Mr McAlister does not believe the British Government is deliberately conspiring to silence Mr Rama. Rather, he says the painter and writer has become the victim of petty officialdom at a time when there is an urgent need for him to speak out.

Mr Rama, who has a two-year residence permit in France, said: "I come from the most backward country in the Balkans, where there is a paper shortage. Albanian officials stuck extra pages in my passport. Of course it looks tatty, but I am not suspicious."

Mr Rama, who has travelled all over the world and has been widely quoted in the international media since the latest crisis began, said a British consular official in Paris also objected to the fact that his passport had expired.

Mr Rama said: "I am a dissident and am not officially able to apply for a new passport. The old one I have contains my French residence permit, which expires in November. It is recognised by immigration authorities all over Europe.

"The British consulate in Paris has called me in for an interview in three weeks' time but the situation is too desperate to wait that long."

A spokeswoman for the British embassy in Paris said consular officials needed further clarification from Mr Rama of his travel dates and what he intended to do while in Britain.

She said: "We have never refused him a visa. We are asking Mr Rama the standard questions we ask of everyone. When we have the answers we can issue the visa."

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'New proof' of TWA friendly fire cover-up

Paul Webster in Paris and **Ian Katz** in New York report on the latest version of the conspiracy theory that won't go away

THE theory that TWA Flight 800 was downed by a United States navy missile resurfaced yesterday as former Kennedy aide Pierre Salinger claimed he had obtained new evidence that the jet was the victim of "friendly fire" during secret anti-terrorism exercises off Long Island. Weary federal investigators issued a fresh flurry of denials.

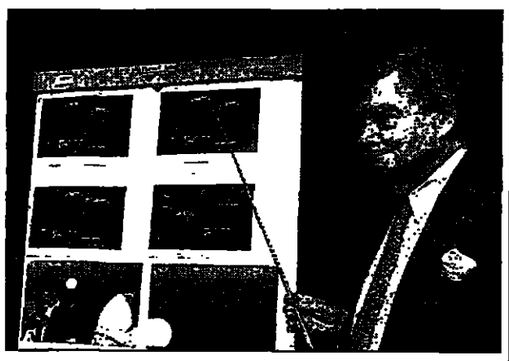
The conspiracy theory that has dogged crash investigators since the July 1996 disaster that killed all 230 on board shortly after takeoff from New York was given fresh life after Paris Match magazine published an article co-written by Mr Salinger. It also printed photographs — said to be taken from tapes at New York's JFK airport — purporting to show the radar signature of a missile speeding towards Flight 800 seconds before the crash.

At a press conference in Paris, Mr Salinger said: "The navy has not been honest. It says no missiles were fired that night. That is not true."

He was ridiculed by aviation experts and mainstream media earlier this year when he claimed to have evidence of a huge cover-up. Since then he has assembled a self-styled "independent inquiry team".

In the article, he claimed to have proof that test firing was taking place in the crash area. May to October had been designated a period for testing missiles off the east coast, he said, and airlines had been warned of a possible risk if they flew below 6000ft.

Mr Salinger's team, which includes a retired United Airlines pilot and a missile expert, claimed seven missile-carrying ships, a submarine and an Orion aircraft, sometimes used for towing decoy targets and monitoring missile firings, were in the area at the time of the crash.



Salinger with the radar pictures PHOTOGRAPH: MICHEL LIPCHITZ

The navy claimed the closest missile-carrying warship was the USS Normandy, 185 miles away, and insisted that no weapon on the ship had the range to bring down the jet.

However, Mr Salinger's team suggested that the 747 was brought down by a secret experimental weapon fired from the Normandy. "We have very, very big missile experts we have been talking to who say the missile could reach 350 miles," he said.

He suggested that the missile was intended to bring down another missile but was attracted by the heat of the 747's engines. He said Washington could not admit to testing weapons banned under agreements with Moscow.

But the FBI, which has subpoenaed a copy of the radar tapes, insisted they offer no evidence to back up the theory.

A Pentagon spokesman confirmed that the crash location was near an area sometimes used for "air combat exercises" but insisted that the area was closed to air traffic during exercises.

Conspiracy theories have been fuelled by more than 150 reported sightings of an object streaking towards the jet before it exploded. But when pressed, Mr Salinger could cite only a mysterious collection of unidentified sources.

The Paris Match photos purport to show the radar screen at 8.30pm local time on July 17, when the Boeing was at 13,300ft, lower than usual to avoid an incoming US Air flight. Another plane on the screen is identified as an Orion. It is claimed that the photos show the navy plane crossing the path of the Boeing without identifying itself.

David Isby, a missile expert at Jane's Intelligence Review, said the type of experimental weapon alleged to have been involved would have left traces in the wreckage.

Crash investigators have ruled out friendly fire, but insist they have not yet established why the jet crashed.

News in brief

Britons on oil barge seized by Nigerians

A GROUP of Nigerians has seized a barge carrying 90 people, including 20 foreigners, off the country's southern coast.

The company that owns the barge, the French oil pipeline firm ETPM, said a labour dispute between ethnic groups was responsible for the incident. It identified the foreigners as 16 French people, three Britons and one American.

Company spokeswoman Ariane Malzac said no lives were in danger, and that about 20 members of the Nigerian navy were anchored in a tugboat a few yards from the barge.

"The barge was blocked and is unable to continue, but it is not a hostage situation," she said. "It is a problem between the communities." She would not say whether the men were armed. — AP.

Lima police find escape tunnel

PERUVIAN police have found a tunnel through which teenage Tupac Amaru rebels planned to escape from a prison in Lima, where their comrades are holding 72 hostages at the Japanese ambassador's home, the government said.

Police discovered the 120ft-long tunnel extending from a youth prison in the Maranga district towards nearby buildings, an interior ministry statement said. It was nearly finished.

"The massive escape was planned for Saturday morning," the statement added. — Reuter.

Ferry lawyer to send divers

The lawyer representing hundreds of relatives of victims of the Estonia ferry, which sank en route to Stockholm in 1994, said yesterday that he planned to send divers to inspect the wreck and identify the cause of the tragedy.

A commission investigating the disaster has on three occasions delayed issuing its final report. Henning Witte, who is leading the relatives' suit against the French company that registered the ship, said he wanted an independent inquiry. — AP.

Cosby arrest

Police have arrested a man and are questioning another and a woman — all of Russian origin, according to one newspaper — about the murder in Los Angeles of the comedian Bill Cosby's son, Ennis, *writes Christopher Reed.*

Algiers crackdown

Algeria's security forces have killed 40 Muslim guerrillas, including 12 shot dead after a gun battle in the capital Algiers, local newspapers said yesterday. — Reuter.

Taste for souvenirs

Tourists in the high Andean mountains are taking advantage of low snowfalls to rob souvenirs from a notorious Argentinian plane crash site where in 1972 surviving rugby players ate their dead team-mates, La Nacion reported yesterday. — Reuter.

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Beer advertisement does nothing to ease president's campaign funding hangover

Chinese toast Clinton hospitality

Andrew Higgins in Beijing

A SHORT walk from Tiananmen Square on Beijing's answer to Oxford Street, President Clinton and his wife Hillary grin at shoppers from behind an oversized plastic beer bottle. They are dressed in evening wear and over their shoulders peers a solemn George Washington. Next to them stands the boss of a Chinese brewery. Empty, dust-covered bottles lie scattered at their feet.

Peddling beer made by the Chinese state-run brewery Haomen was probably not what the leader of the free world had in mind when he posed for a snap at a 1994 White House Christmas party.

But that is what he it looks like to the countless Chinese who visit Wangfujing, the busiest shopping street in Beijing, and pause to peer at the advertising display.

The Chinese government has stoutly denied allegations that it sought to woo Washington by donating money to the Democratic Party or members of Congress. The United States chargé d'affaires in Beijing, William McCahill jnr, was summoned this week and a halt demanded to US media reports suggesting a Chinese plot to funnel funds into US politics.

Mr Clinton's photographic presence on Wangfujing, however, attests to an acute understanding in China of the way Washington works and the access that this has helped bring. There is no evidence of a centrally orchestrated scheme to suborn US democracy but there are signs of freelance favour-mongering by individual Chinese.

A guide to the murky ways of Washington is contained in a report issued this month by the Chinese government in response to a US survey on human rights. Though intended as a rebuttal of American attacks on China's intolerance of dissent, it could serve as a handbook on buying influence in Washington.

"American democracy is, in the final analysis, a 'money-bag democracy'. In the US, running for public office requires large sums of money," says the report, published by the official Xinhua news agency. "American politics has become more and more the politics of buying power through money. Political campaign finances in the US are funded mainly through donations from large wealthy organisations and individuals . . . In the 1996 elections both the Democrats and the Republicans raised huge amounts of money by auctioning opportunities to meet the president or congressmen."

Haomen's photograph was arranged by Johnny Chung, a flamboyant Chinese-American from California who has escorted a procession of Asian businessmen into the White House for souvenir shots with the president or first lady. He gave nearly £250,000 to the Democratic Party between 1993 and 1996, largesse that helped secure 49 visits to the White House and fortified a sagging fax technology business with consultancy fees from clients eager to share his access.

Among them was Chen Shizeng, then president of the Haomen Group. He is standing next to Mr Clinton in the photo, taken beside the White House Christmas tree. Mr Chung is next to Mrs Clinton.

A Chinese reporter who covered the Washington visit has been quoted as saying that Mr Chen said: "Starting from the White House, I want to establish an American market for Haomen beer."

Mr Clinton is on record as saying he sees nothing wrong with showing gratitude to his supporters, though his spokesman, Mike McCurry, has sought to distance the president from the beer campaign. "The White House is concerned when anyone uses their access to it for private commercial purposes, which is what we believe may have happened here," he said.

The other side of the equation is more opaque. Haomen now denies any knowledge of Mr Chen's White House visit or his whereabouts. A spokesman said he had retired. Instead of conquering the American market, Haomen has seen its most profitable beer ventures swallowed up in a joint venture with French yoghurt makers Danoné. Such arrangements, however, can mean a large windfall for the original management. The new company, Oulian (European Union) Haomen, denies any dealings with Mr Chen, who has vanished from view.

But the picture still lingers on Wangfujing — an embarrassment to all and a revealing footnote to China's verdict on US democracy. "The US, which boasts about being the model of democracy, has been peddling its democratic system through the world with wishful thinking. But everyone knows that the 200-year-old American democracy remains democracy for the rich," says the Beijing report.

China now has some very rich people.

Fury as lease on US base offered to Beijing

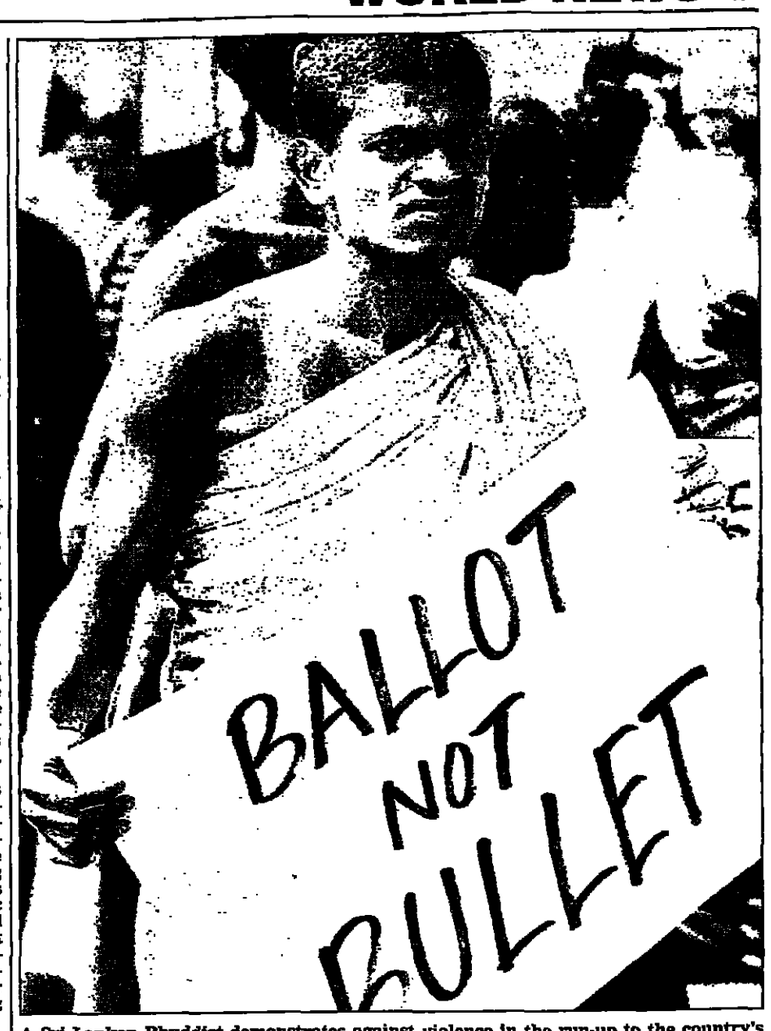
Martin Walker in Washington

PRESIDENT Clinton was yesterday accused of creating a "national security nightmare" in return for foreign campaign donations by offering the state-run Chinese merchant shipping fleet a leasehold on a former naval base at Long Beach, California.

"Everywhere we turn, we see China taking active measures to compromise, infiltrate, neutralise or otherwise undermine American national security interests," charged Republican congressman Gerald Solomon, the powerful chairman of the House rules committee.

"Is this what China is getting in return for its big donations to Clinton and the Democratic National Committee?"

Demanding yet another independent counsel be appointed to investigate Mr Clinton's role in offering the base to Cosco (Chinese Ocean Shipping) as a commercial beachhead, Mr Solomon won support from California's two Democratic senators, who demanded a Pentagon review on the security implications.



A Sri Lankan Bhuddist demonstrates against violence in the run-up to the country's local elections during a protest march in Colombo yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: DEXTER CRUEZ

Mother Teresa finds successor

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

MOTHER Teresa's Missionaries of Charity yesterday elected an Indian sister as her successor, but their founder will continue to guide the order despite old age and frail health.

Sister Nirmala, aged 63, who was born a Hindu in the northern state of Bihar, has for years been one of the trusted lieutenants of Mother Teresa, founding the contemplative wing of the order in New York 20 years ago.

Flanked by senior sisters and a seated Mother Teresa, she waved from the balcony of Mother House, the solid white building in Calcutta that is the headquarters of the order.

"I am in dreamland right now," she said. "It's a big responsibility. If you look at it from myself, I am afraid. But looking at God, and depending on prayer, I think I will be able to continue God's work."

Mother Teresa also spoke, but her words had to be relayed to the crowd because her voice was too feeble. "Now I am happy," she said, reaching out to bless her successor.

Although Mother Teresa, who has been in hospital three times since August with heart ailments and breathing difficulties, in effect relinquishes administrative control over the order from today, she will retain the title of mother to more than 4,000 nuns, brothers and priests around the world.

"They are reserving the title mother for Mother Teresa and Sister Nirmala will be known as sister-general, but the responsibilities of superior-general will be with her," said Henry d'Souza, the Archbishop of Calcutta. "The sisters have chosen the person who will continue the inspiration or character of Mother Teresa."

Since taking her vows more than 30 years ago, Sister Nirmala has accompanied Mother Teresa on several trips. As a contemplative, she was not as familiar to outsiders as some other senior sisters, but was apparently elected by an overwhelming margin, ending six weeks of secret debate among 122 delegates to the order's chapter.

Australian arts world fooled by 'Aborigine' who told white lie

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

AN acclaimed "Aboriginal" author owned up yesterday to being a white Australian, embarrassing an arts establishment already red-faced after previous ethnic hoaxes.

The award-winning writer Wanda Koolmatrie, who was hailed as "a distinctive new voice" in Aboriginal women's autobiography, has owned up to being a middle-aged man called Leon Carmen.

In a hoax concocted with literary agent John Bayley, the two men decided a book by a part-Aboriginal woman would have a better chance of being published than the first novel of a white man.

The result was My Own Sweet Time, published in 1995, which won an important literary award and was a set text in schools.

The scandal is the second to hit the Australian arts world in a week. Last Friday a leading "Aboriginal" artist, Eddie Burrup, was revealed to be Elizabeth Durack, a white artist.

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YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT. C8022

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The rising risk of eruption

Arafat can't be humiliated to keep Likud in power

MADNESS in the Middle East knows no distinction. Yesterday a Jordanian soldier clips on a magazine and shoots 13 Israeli schoolgirls on an outing. Two months ago, an Israeli soldier shoots seven Palestinians in the marketplace and is only just stopped from reloading. It is as perverse to blame King Hussein for the latest incident — though one Israeli minister was quick to do so — as it would have been to suggest that Binyamin Netanyahu had his hand on the earlier trigger. Soldiers are as likely to suffer from severe personality disorders as anyone else — perhaps more so. Yet the wider context in which they have to operate under stress may still be a contributory factor: and the current atmosphere of acute tension and diplomatic gridlock can only heighten the risk of this sort of horrendous incident occurring again.

King Hussein's letter to Mr Netanyahu is an extraordinary document which signals the extent of the new crisis. It is not — as Mr Netanyahu claimed in seeking to rebut it — an instance of "automatically adopting the Palestinian position." It indicates rather just how far the Israeli prime minister's actions have gone in alienating the two Arab states and neighbours (Jordan and Egypt) who had most conspicuously broken ranks with the common pro-Palestinian front, and refrained from routine repetition of the line from Gaza. It is an indication too of the extent of Mr Netanyahu's inept diplomacy in the last couple of weeks during which he has also placed under the most extreme pressure Israel's alliance with the US. We might say that he had pushed it to the brink — except that this relationship appears to have no outer limit. Nevertheless all the signs from Washington are of intense irritation. The US has been manoeuvred into the most bizarre degree of inconsistency. President Clinton himself criticises the Israeli plans for constructing a new Jewish neighbourhood in East Jerusalem: his ambassador then vetoes a resolution in the Security Council to the same effect moved not by the Arab states but by Washington's European allies. We can almost see the desperate clawing in the air to regain balance as officials then say that the US will probably attend the crisis meeting called by Mr Arafat in Gaza tomorrow.

There is of course a measure of calculation on both sides: these are negotiations conducted by professionals seeking to extract the maximum advantage. Israel hopes to give as little ground in the first two stages of redeployment as possible: Mr Arafat needs to gain as much as possible to strengthen his hand for the final stage negotiations. Mr Netanyahu tries to satisfy pro-settlement opinion in the Knesset while he cedes territory which, no matter what size, the hardliners regard as inalienable. Yet his own antipathy to the Oslo settlement has led to grotesque miscalculation: and he has squandered the credibility regained through the Hebron deal. In the crudest terms, the commitment to new building at Har Homa would require a higher percentage of land to be evacuated. Conversely, a lower percentage would require settlement restraint. And this is without considering what is or is not *right*.

Palestinian outrage is more than pro forma and the risk of sustained violence, of which King Hussein has warned, is now increasingly serious. The absence of protracted trouble has been taken too much for granted when Israelis reproach the Palestinian authority for "not doing enough about terrorism." It is unrealistic for the US to urge Mr Arafat to accept humiliation indefinitely in order to keep the Likud party in power. Before much longer any alternative may come to seem preferable — even the unknown.

Overpaid and undersupervised

City bonuses are absurdly high: but who will change them?

WHAT IS happening to City salaries and bonuses must seem like an aberration from outer space not just to millions of ordinary folk worrying about how to make ends meet but to managers working in high positions in industry who would have to win the lottery to match the rewards now common in the City. The situation has deteriorated so much that the Bank of England has felt it necessary to criticise the City's annual bonus system which this year is expected to churn out a staggering £750 million to traders and staff. Among the beneficiaries are Schroders which this week disclosed that payouts to staff had increased by £45 million this year or £45,000 per head. Average pay at the bank has soared from £75,000 last year to £90,000 this year and since those averages include secretaries and office boys the rewards higher up must have been considerable including one trader who earned £1 million in bonuses.

To earn money like that for a job — involving selling interest rates swaps or organising finance for take-overs — that most people can't relate to their own lives is unfair and ultimately corrupting. The B of E is worried because the pressures to produce ever better results, in a culture where money is the only criterion, have led to serious financial scandals including some where the trader concerned departed for a new job leaving a ticking time bomb with his former employer.

The latest crisis is the investment banking arm of NatWest, which yesterday revealed its losses from options trading had widened to £77 million from earlier estimates of £50 million. These days the City is a much more important part of the economy than it used to be when manufacturing was booming. It is a very large wealth creator and employer of labour but that is no reason why it should write its own rewards that open up a huge gulf with the rest of society. The rot starts with recruitment. Why do they feel impelled to pay starting salaries of £50,000 to raw new graduates at a time when graduate unemployment is rife? Is it anything to do with the way they restrict selection to a handful of prestigious universities like Oxford and Cambridge and a few others? Are they trying to tell us that salaries will go on ballooning upwards because there are no other qualified people available? Have they tried training people to increase the pool of available talent or even recruiting from a wider social spectrum?

Senior managers argue that if they cut bonuses, whole teams of traders would abscond to rival firms. It is a fine reflection on a company that the deepest loyalty it can inspire is to the end-of-year bonus. No such bonuses await low paid workers at the other end of the spectrum anxiously waiting to hear whether the Labour government-in-waiting will fix the minimum wage at £3 an hour or nearer £4. They needn't expect sympathy from these City high fliers. They would have difficulty knowing what they were going on about.

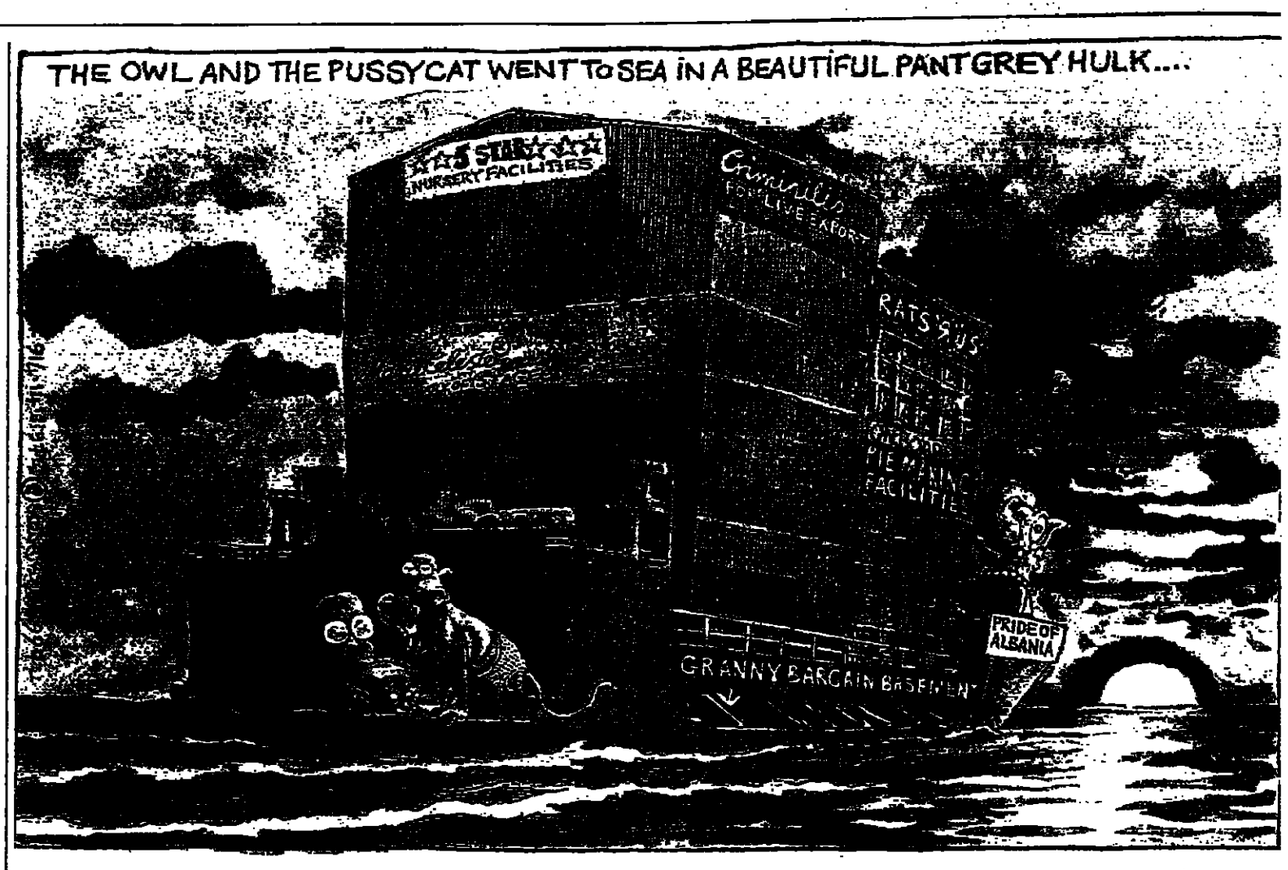
Canterbury versus Canterbury

It's difficult to say which archbishop is being less discreet

THAT clerics fall out with clerics is a sad but recognised fact of life, established not just in the novels of Trollope but in real life events like the recent ructions at Lincoln. Mostly, though, these collisions occur between those in subordinate roles. For bishop to clash with bishop is rarer: for archbishop to clash with archbishop, rarer still.

Archbishop Carey, it emerged yesterday, is cross with his predecessor because of opinions expressed in the life of Dr Runcie which Humphrey Carpenter published last year. Dr Runcie, it ought to be said, seemed pretty cross with himself when the book appeared, for having talked so frankly into Mr Carpenter's tape recorder: especially, perhaps, because of the section covering the marriage of Charles and Diana, which he seems now to believe was doomed from the start. But this public display of penitence for what certainly seemed a curious naivety has not spared him Dr Carey's rebuke. "Remarks that we might call rather indiscreet may suggest that people might now ask whether they can trust anybody, any priest, ever again" the present incumbent is reported as saying. There was a sense, Dr Carey added, in which these revelations had undercut his own ministry.

That Dr Carey's complaints — filmed by Meridian TV for a documentary to be shown on Sunday — should have surfaced so soon after Charles and Diana entrusted their son's confirmation to the Bishop of London rather than to him is probably mere coincidence. Yet lesser ranks in the Church of England may wonder if Dr Carey, rehearsing his doubts for the TV cameras, was conspicuously more discreet than Dr Runcie telling all to Humphrey Carpenter. "Open not thine heart to every man" (Ecclesiasticus 8.19). This may be in the Apocrypha, but it's not bad advice.



Letters to the Editor

Battle rages over Bosnia

WHATEVER his motives, Thomas Deichmann's article on the famous ITN picture of the Trnopolje camp and your reaction to it raise interesting questions about modern war reporting, particularly by television (A shot that's still ringing, March 14).

The demand for short, hard-hitting segments with clear villians and heroes forces cameramen to look for powerful symbols. In the case of the Trnopolje picture, the barbed wire represents forced confinement, the emaciated Fikret Alic, starvation. The two together spell concentration camp.

Yet neither symbol was entirely true. Fikret Alic and his fellows were confined not by the barbed wire but by armed Serb guards — even the ITN footage makes it clear that the wire itself would not have deterred a serious attempt at escape.

And Fikret Alic's emaciated condition was an exception. (See your own Maggie O'Kane's report on July 29 1992 that Trnopolje was one of the better camps: "They are fed there and the villagers can bring them supplies.") Wider shots on the ITN film even reveal men with paunches hanging over their belts.

So the symbolic picture was not quite accurate. As Channel 4's Ian Williams has said of the film from which the still was taken: "In a sense it's almost the power of the images going two steps ahead of the proof that went with them." (Press Gazette, August 17 1992). The picture then became even less accurate when taken out of context by the British tabloids and labelled "Belsen 92". These are important points for debate but unfortunately debate has been stifled by ITN's decision to reach for its lawyers.
Phillip Knightley.
4 Northumberland Place,
London W2 5BS.

LUKE Harding may be entitled to tell the world that he does not like Living Marxism, me or Thomas Deichmann. But it might have been more useful for your readers if he had bothered to deal with the actual evidence that Deichmann has presented, which shows exactly how ITN's award-winning reports from Trnopolje camp in August 1992 fooled the world. Instead, on this central issue, there is a resounding silence.

All right, I admit that I wear good suits, went to university, sometimes drink "vin rouge" and am a Communist-Fascist-Serbomaniac-Alien-From-the-X-Files. But what has any of that to do with the truth revealed by the ITN rushes from Trnopolje, which Deichmann showed in public for the first time last week?
Mick Hume.
Editor, Living Marxism.
27 Old Gloucester Street,
London WC1N 3XX.

LUKE Harding outlines the support given to the Serbian nationalists by the Revolutionary Communist Party. For those of us who were in Bosnia during the war their claims are sick.

Why was almost all the trade-union and labour movement in Britain silent over mass murder, rape and ethnic cleansing?

The RCP only says openly what many others thought: "Yugoslavia represented workers' unity. It was broken up by German capitalism. Milosevic tried to defend Yugoslavia even if he did some bad things." There were a thousand variations on this theme.

It is becoming clear how deep were the philosophical ties that bound many on the left, whether Stalinist, anti-Stalinist or Social Democrat, with the regimes in Eastern Europe. When Belgrade's ethnic cleansers invaded Bosnia, these British "socialists" were blinded by the red stars on the hats of Milosevic's troops and the word socialist over his party's HQ. They share his view that ordinary people are expendable in the greater cause.

But thanks to the efforts of Guardian reporters like Ed Vulliamy, Maggie O'Kane and others, as well as honest people from ex-Yugoslavia who were able to make their voices heard, many people in the labour movement were able to see their way to taking sides in the war.
Bob Myers.
Workers Aid for Bosnia,
PO Box 9, Eccles SO,
Salford M30 7FX.

WHY does Luke Harding have a problem with the fact that RCP boys wear Adidas t-shirts and RCP girls wear "little black dresses and modish trouser suits"? In the era of the Spice Girls, Harding should not be so easily flummoxed by girls in dresses talking about politics. If one of the worst things about the RCP is that they are trendy and have some "girl power" of their own, maybe they should make a record too.
Katy Sims & Lara Moore.
University of Brighton,
Lewes Road,
Brighton BN2 4AT.

LUKE Harding provides us with a good example of Martin Bell's dictum that mere objectivity give way to the requirements of a greater "moral enterprise". Unwilling to address the main issue, for this requires an objectively dispassionate eye, Harding instead treats us to a deluge of petty slander. Surely the question as to whether the Trnopolje footage was as misleading as Thomas Deichmann alleges is worthy of more serious attention?
(Dr) Stephen Bowler.
Department of Politics,
The University of Sheffield,
Sheffield S10 2TU.

Why the Chief Inspector needs some further education

I HAD not realised that *human cloning is already* proving so successful, but surely the transfer of DNA from Gradgrind to Woodhead has been a scientific triumph. Roy Hatterseley hits the mark again in his excellent critique of the Chief Inspector's anti-teacher phobia (An inspector falls, March 12).

However, perhaps a perusal of Mr Woodhead's CV helps us to understand even if not forgive. Seven years in three schools, 20 years ago, seem to be Mr Woodhead's total experience at the chalkface, after which he escaped into teacher training and management.

As one who made the shift to teacher education after 20 years in the classroom, I, too, found it so much easier telling others how to do it, so easy to forget the "hands-on" problems. May I suggest to Mr Blair that a retraining programme for the Chief Inspector include a 12-month stint with an inner-city fourth form. I would gladly volunteer to supervise.
Alan Halden.
66 Laureate Way,
Hemel Hempstead,
Herts HP1 3RU.

I WRITE as a former teacher (14 years), inspector of schools and director of education. How could Woodhead allow himself to introduce the league tables for primary schools flanked by the Secretary of State — who sadly did not hesitate to make political capital out of a professional assessment — and the chairman of the Conservative Party? What was *he* doing there?

As a former inspector of schools, Mrs Shephard must know that the reasons schools succeed or fail their tests are complex. How could she lend herself to such black-and-white judgements, knowing as she must do that many schools and their teachers have to cope with a concentration of grossly inadequate parents, pupils who have no home support at all, pupils whose first language is not English? The entire exercise called for a calm appraisal. The Secretary of State failed to give it and so failed hard-pressed teachers and LEAs.
A J Davis,
6 Rock Close, Broadsands,
Paignton, Devon TQ4 6LA.

AS a primary-school governor, I note that Roy Hattersley misses a discriminatory aspect of the generalised criticisms of teachers.

Since the governing body "is responsible for the school's ethos and good performance", governors should also be the targets of criticism, if the purpose is to raise standards. Since they were not, it must be concluded that the primary aim of the criticisms is not the raising of standards.
(Dr) Jeffrey Boss.
Castle Coach House,
Castle Pitch,
Stroud,
Glos GL5 2HP.

We're advertising a complaint

IN case D J Taylor (To be honest, decent and truthful, it stinks, March 12) needs to add to his catalogue of the uselessness of the Advertising Standards Authority, let me offer him the following.

I live in Pembrokeshire and last year, a large multinational company placed an advertisement in my local paper about how the shipping and burning of Orimulsion, often called "the world's dirtiest fuel", would be just fine and dandy with none of the potentially disastrous risks of damage such as the Sea Empress oil spill.

Now, I could have complained about this ad to the ASA, but I did complain once, many years ago, and, like D J Taylor, my complaint was upheld but the ad campaign in question was already dead and forgotten. It was a pointless exercise. So my wife and I decided to place an ad. parodying the original ad.

The ASA wrote to us saying the multinational company had complained. We were given two weeks to respond ("time being of the essence in resolving complaints").

It is now almost a year since the original ads were placed, but still there is no adjudication. In its very first letter to us, the ASA emphasised how its reputation relied on its ability to "respond swiftly" to complaints.

If only that letter had been an ad. We could have complained to the ASA.
Name and address supplied.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used.

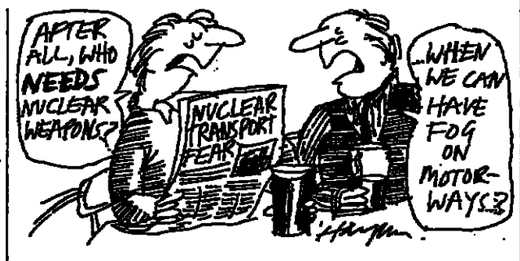
From mad to bad

I SUPPORT the Government's enthusiasm for league tables and would like these published as soon as possible: abbattoir hygiene standards, ranked by the percentage of uncontaminated carcases processed; beef herds ranked by detected BSE cases; Cabinet Ministers ranked by costs of mistakes.
Mike Parslow.
Fairview Cottage,
Penton's Hill, Hyde,
Hampshire SP6 2HL.

THE recent spate of political defections is rather illuminating: Alan Howarth MP from Conservative to Labour; Emma Nicholson MP from Conservative to Liberal Democrat; Sir George Gardiner MP from Conservative to Referendum Party; Cllr Stuart Hughes from Monster Raving Loony to Conservative.
Colin Lewisohn.
33 Fitzroy Drive,
Leeds LS8 4AG.

SURELY what's different about the Spice Girls is their overt sexual aggression and their appearance of wanting to be girls on top? This not only makes them popular with women and teenagers who see them as role models, but also with men who admire women with a bravura that makes them intriguing adversaries/partners in the mating game. And also to men who just like to be dominated by assertive women.

As long as the Spice Girls don't start thinking that their success in the pop world makes their opinions on other matters especially valuable, then there seems no good reason why they shouldn't be around for a long time to come.
Ernest Wood.
Fourwinds, Okehampton,
Devon EX20 4LX.



Danger: nuclear collision ahead

THE recent spate of multiple pile-ups on some of our motorways is alarming evidence of careless driving on increasingly congested roads (Three killed in motorway fog, March 11). Despite this, the MoD continues to transport nuclear warheads on the M4, M40, M25 and A1(M) to and from Scotland, while other nuclear materials are taken by road from Aldermaston to BNFL Chapelcross, BNFL Sellafield, Rolls Royce Nuclear in Derby, RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire and Coulport (Scotland).

In the guidelines issued to local authorities for dealing with an accident involving such a convoy, the worst-case scenario is an accident involving fire. This happened in at least one of the recent incidents; had a nuclear convoy been involved, the results could have been horrific. When will the MoD take steps to remove this hazard from our roads?

If redundant warheads must be returned to Burghfield for dismantling (which I welcome) the convoys should travel very slowly and roads closed to other traffic for a mile in front of and behind them.
Jean Kaye.
5 Annesley Road,
Oxford OX4 4JH.

A pension fraud still unresolved

THE Labour Party has promised trade unions "fairness, not favours" when it forms the next government (Pensioners kept waiting, March 12). I was therefore surprised to see shadow transport minister Glenda Jackson quoted as saying that Labour would not return to the National Bus Company pensioners the £200 million taken from their pension fund by the present Government. Returning this money, which your report accurately describes as "plundered", is an elementary demand of fairness, not to mention the law. I hope that Labour will not wish to be associated with a Robert Maxwell-style pensions fraud and will obey the ruling of the pensions ombudsman that this theft be reversed.
Bill Morris.
General Secretary, TGWU.
Transport House,
Palace Street,
London SW1E 5JD.

A Country Diary

GLOUCESTERSHIRE: Just as part of the fox population and part of the lesser black backed gull population have come to find urban living easier than rural and coastal sites respectively, so too has the common frog *(rana temporaria)* increasingly found that suburban garden ponds provide a safer breeding ground. The frog has probably had little alternative. So many farmyard ponds are no more that its range of habitat choices must necessarily be considerably restricted. Lew and I normally meet on the first tee at 8am on Saturday as members of the Stinchcombe Hill Beavers. Our springtime conversations, as we contest 18 holes for Stableford points, often consist of me telling him about our lambs (none yet, but watch this space) whilst Lew tells me about his frogs — a pond seething with 40-plus frogs and great masses of frog-spawn floating on the surface of the water. So I went to see Lew's frogs on Sunday morning. He has a pond in a butyl liner which faces morning sun and measures 9ft by 5ft, with a depth of three feet. It is netted to prevent heron depredation. It was designed for goldfish and ghost koi, the frogs and newts have been a bonus on top of the resident fish. The masses of spawn on the surface confirmed the breeding activity which has the pond alive with mating frogs as February turns to March. They were reticent at the time of my visit and kept well under the cover of the surrounding rockery as Lew showed me his fish. Summer storm rain, he related, sees frogs all over the grass and garden. It struck me increasingly that Lew and his fellow fish-fancying gardeners were, with garden ponds, making a major contribution to the survival of the common frog for its traditional habitat has become less and less available. It's not just the loss of rural ponds, it's also the drainage that leaves less marshland and wet grassland — snipe have suffered from the same rural changes, with a matching loss of breeding habitat.

COLIN LUCKHURST

هكذا من الأصل

هكذا من الأصل

Diary

Matthew Norman

FRESH from its triumphant conveyance of stomach illness throughout north London and the Home Counties, Three Valleys Water stakes a claim to be considered the country's most amusing PR practitioner. The purveyor of contaminated water to is trying to flog clients insurance (at over £10 a year) to cover them for its failures, such as burst supply pipes. Pat Hay (Mrs) explains in a letter that, since the scheme is not run by Three Valleys, it is outside Ofwat's jurisdiction, which will have the alarm bells ringing. But let us leave these curiosities to one side, and move to the *coup de grâce*. "If you're not totally satisfied, then return your policy certificate within 28 days," writes Hay (Mrs) in conclusion, "and your money will be refunded (providing no claim has been made)." Can anyone explain how anyone could possibly be dissatisfied *before* making a claim?

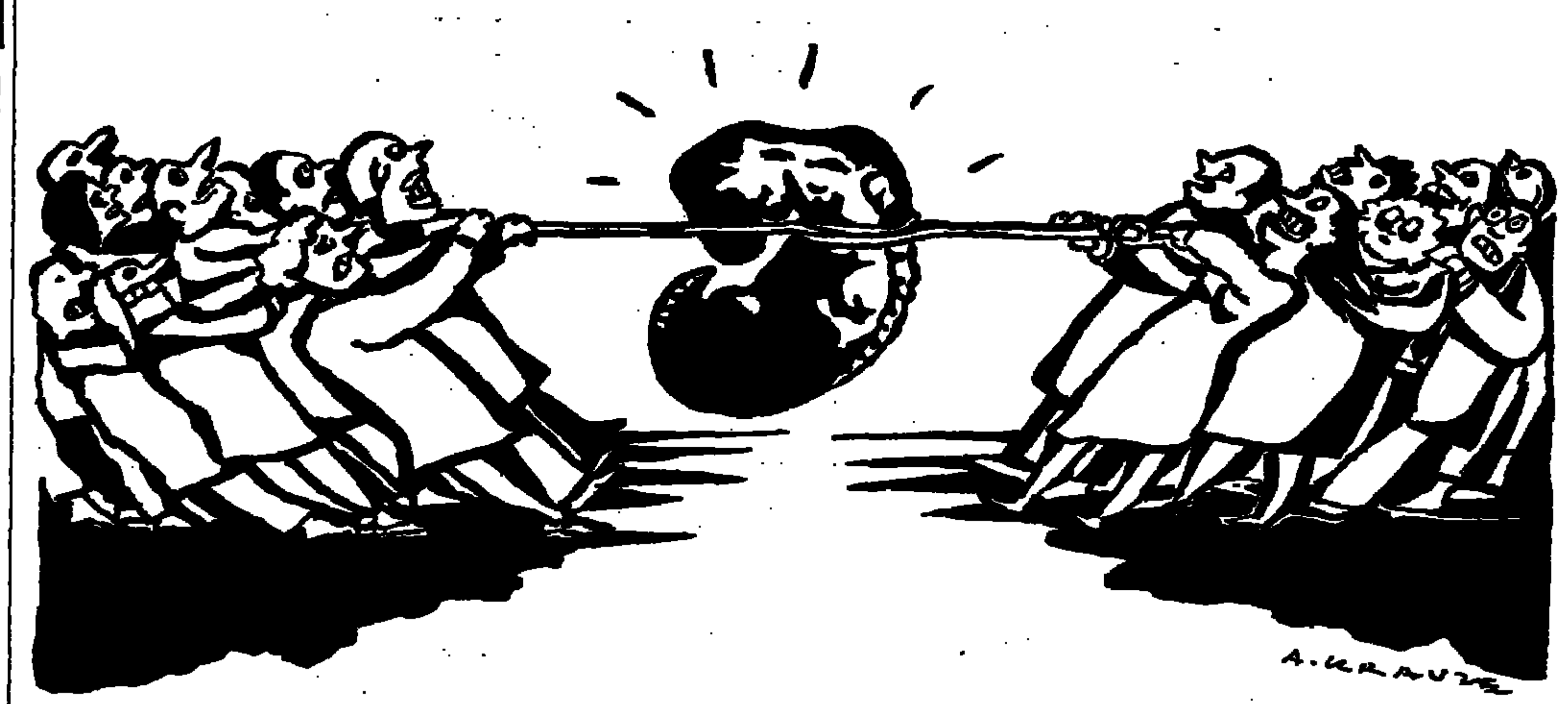
WE are sorely distressed by a Spectator attack from sane and rational Paul Johnson. In a long awaited tribute to David Evans, who was unknowingly taped while raving at a local school, Paul empathises with the *Welwyn Hatfield MP*. "No matter how intimate the dinner party," he writes, "I now regretfully assume that any remarks I make there are liable to appear (mendaciously distorted, of course) in one of the many gossip columns of the Guardian," not much further now, "whose chief purpose is to exploit *the current climate* of political and social treason." This is too wounding. Let's stop there.

BY way of striking a balance, meanwhile, the Spectator also carries a polemic from the Paul Johnson *manqué* Peter Hitchens . . . against you, the readers of the Guardian. This is a direct counterstrike, of course, to the You, the Jury vote in which readers voted, by more than seven to one, that Peter once wore a moustacheless beard while *a far-left student in* the 70s. So I've no sympathy for any of you. You brought it on yourselves.

AT the Ministry of Agriculture, the fun continues, with Douglas Hogg making a [illegible] request to his Grade 2 civil servants. Hoggers has asked them "to draw up a list of unexploded bombs" for him to "contemplate and study over the weekend". The air at MAFF becomes more chaotic and panic-stricken by the hour, so let us *hope no mischievous* Labour MP should table a question asking when Mr Hogg will find time to deposit his list of unexploded bombs in the House of Commons library.

AFTER a long leave of absence, what a pleasure to say "hell-ooooo!!" once again to the Mirror Group's Charlie Wilson, who continues to show his delicate executive touch at Canary Wharf. Latest sackings involve 11 circulation reps. This is not for *the obvious reason* that there is very little circulation left to deal with, according to Nick in the press office, but "because the department is changing the way it does its job". (Asked whether the 11 might not then be retrained, Nick said: "*We have to move forward and we don't have time for that.*") However, thanks to a masterstroke from Gentleman Charlie, the loss may barely be felt: the fey Glaswegian has sent a memo instructing all staff to pop into five local newsagents every weekend and check up on sales. Welcome home, Charlie!

THE flame of class warfare is kept flickering at British Telecom. Harpers & Queen reports that a well-spoken man, calling from a phonebox to complain that, after three days, his 0171 exchange was still out of order, has been given short shrift. "It's a major cable fault," said a female operator, "which has been an inconvenience for us, too." When the man pointed out that his newsagent's number had been restored, this was too much. "You're just an upper-class person," said the operator, pulling the plug. "I'm not going to speak to you any more."



A carefree abortion can be embarrassing

Decca Aitkenhead

PREGNANCY counsellors are much like agony aunts; most women in search of their services will opt for the one they think will give them what they're looking for. A young, pregnant, frightened Ann Widdecombe would be a surprising arrival at the doors of a Marie Stopes clinic, and I would be unlikely to take my troubles to the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. So each side invests heavily in scare stories about the enemy ("They keep the remains *in the sink*, you know!"; "Nuns show girls a *bucket!*" etc), with very little *to go on. This seems a mistake*, so, one morning this week, I invented a calamitous pregnancy, and took myself off for some pro-life counselling.

Spuc and Life each have little houses in central London, located, rather unfortunately, on backstreets. At Life, a woman who looks like a kindly country granny listens calmly as I describe a standard plight: unwanted pregnancy, horror at the prospect of inadequate, impoverished parenthood, and endless sound reasons why this baby is plainly an appalling idea.

"Do you know what your baby looks like?" she smiles. She gets out some pictures to show me. "Eight weeks now, did you say?" she coaxes, "or was it nine?" She is keen to upgrade my foetus to the caption which says it can now curl its fingers round an object. She addresses all her comments to my stomach, and they are punctuated — I'm sorry, but there's no other way to describe them — with pregnant pauses.

"What do you think your baby would say to his mummy," she wonders, "if he could talk to you? I think he'd ask, 'Are you going to let me live?' " If my answer's no, I will certainly go to hell. But that will be the least of my problems. I'll be sending myself to "living hell" first.

It is always pleasing to discover that your adversaries are every bit as objectionable as you had suspected. Pro-life's trump card is vicious: abortion is devastating, and you can *never* escape the scars of guilt and shame. Thank *God, then, for pro-choice liberals*. Only, we heard a lot from them this week, and their view seemed to be — stop me if you've heard this one before — that abortion is devastating, and you can never escape the . . .

In their anxiety to show that they do not take abortion lightly, defenders of the *Abortion Act* have ended up sounding like their opponents. On Radio 4's Call Nick Ross last Tuesday, pro-choicers were falling over each other to talk up the trauma. "No woman ever takes the decision to abort lightly," they chanted, and there is "always A Terrible Emotional Price to pay".

One of the unexpected benefits of having had an abortion is that I find myself able to say with confidence that they are wrong. To be pregnant at university at 20 was a desperate misfortune, but to have the baby was quite literally unthinkable. *So it was no harder* to "decide" to abort than it would have been to "decide" to have a limb amputated after a horrible car crash. These are clearly decisions one would never *want* to make — but nor, in such circumstances, can they meaningfully be called "decisions" at all. In that sense, let us be candid: *the decision to have an* abortion is indeed sometimes taken "lightly".

"SOCIETY today denies women who have had abortions the 'permission' to grieve," according to the founder of British Victims of Abortion. The *opposite is in fact true. It is no* longer taboo to have had an abortion, but absolutely taboo to say, "I had an abortion, and actually wasn't traumatised at all." I searched myself for doubt, trauma, guilt, and found none, nor has any surfaced since. The women leaving the clinic that afternoon were a model of relieved and *happy womanhood*.

This account of abortion is one you will often hear in private, but rarely in public. It is certainly not universal, nor necessarily even the norm, *but it does disprove the notion* that abortion is, by definition, a monstrous ordeal. Pro-lifers dismiss this experience as *denial*, or *delayed* reaction, but as they are fighting a *crude* crusade, such spurious stabs are no more than their right. *It is the vaguely liberal pro-*choicers' refusal to accommodate this account which is unacceptable. Nick Ross gave a perfect, if unwitting, illustration of this in his introduction last Tuesday. "If you had an abortion, was it merely a modern convenience to bail you out of trouble? Or," and here his tone fell, "was it a private tragedy that haunts you *still*?"

The carefree abortion is frowned upon in polite pro-choice circles, largely because *it gets tangled in with anxiety* about a flippant, take-it-or-leave-it approach to the whole weighty business of parenting. In fact, it signifies the exact opposite. It is women who treat motherhood with proper respect who are able to terminate an unwanted and plainly ill-advised pregnancy with so little doubt, and who therefore *feel little trauma or later* regret. They do not imagine they have made a glib or trivial choice, but an important and sensible one.

Women who decline to feign devastation also cause alarm within the pro-choice lobby because they are seen as a PR liability. Pro-lifers will be thrilled to scandalise about *those girls going round saying* they had an abortion at the drop of a hat and didn't give two hoots, confirming all those age-old accusations of abortion campaigners as callous baby-haters. But in their concern to throw off that charge, pro-choicers have succeeded in doing women a damaging disservice.

Spuc sent me away with an ominous book all about post-abortion trauma — collected works of anguish, the main symptoms of which, apparently, are guilt and *shame. It is hard to imagine* what pro-life post-abortion counsellors can possibly say to make women feel better, what with *all the living hell* and the eternal hell to look forward to. But when abortion's very defenders are *also insisting all* women must feel awful, it is hardly surprising that so many do. The ones who still manage not to feel guilty then feel guilty and anxious about their "unnatural" absence of guilt.

READING the book, a sad irony becomes clear. Those women shattered by their experience of abortion are those who terminated a pregnancy which they desperately *wanted to continue, but, for* various agonising reasons, felt unable to. Self-recrimination, resentment and regret all, understandably, follow. It is women who categorically do not want to keep their babies who suffer least; and yet it is these women the pro-choice movement finds most embarrassing.

Supporters of the Abortion Law have enjoyed so little serious challenge that their logic has grown flabby. It was pitifully easy for Cardinal Winning to wrong-foot them this week — a simple offer of money had campaigners huffing and puffing about "bribes" and "buying babies", because they have allowed themselves *to be drawn into a version of* abortion where there are acceptable candidates (poor mothers, rape victims and so on) and unacceptable ones, women who simply do not want to have a baby, otherwise known as selfish teenage strumpets.

The movement should have been strong enough to turn *around* to the good Cardinal, smile broadly, and say, fine, you can offer all the money you like — it makes not a whit of difference.

Have you heard the one about Comic Relief?

Mark Steel

TONIGHT is the worst night of the year for the poor: Comic Relief. How can anyone see someone like Phil Collins saying: "Just *£2,000 is all we need to feed* this village," without thinking, "Well bloody well give it to them then. You have that *down the back of your settee*."

Other supporters include Jeffrey Archer, John Harvey-Jones, Texaco, the Sun, and the banks, who between them — through overseas-aid cuts, interest-rate rises, cash crops and Thatcherism — caused the poverty in the first place.

But tonight managing directors will come on and buy themselves the cheapest possible advert by saying: "Um, well Anthea, it, er, gives me very great pleasure, to, er, present this 50-foot wide cheque for £2,000 on behalf of Lloyds-TSB plc with highly competitive loan rates and *currently offering a fixed-in*terest option for first-time buyers, to, er, the Comic Relief Fund. And remember, 'When you've queued all day for a handful of rice, you can bank with Lloyds at a cut-rate price'. Er, thanks Anthea."

It's as if Noel Edmonds had gone on Kampuchean Television to present Peasant Relief, *and announced*: "Well now we've got a special treat because here to hand over a whole sackful of grain is Pol Pot. And remember, you can make your payments at any branch of the Khmer Rouge."

In certain fundraising events, however, the "all in it together" feeling breaks down a little. For example there's been no offer from the Merseyside Port Authority to make a wacky single with the striking Liverpool dockers, along with a hilarious video in which company shareholders dance on a container ship with pickets while the words "Make your payments to the Merseyside Shop Stewards' Appeal Fund — Every little helps" *flash* over the screen.

The infuriating part of events like Comic Relief is that they play on the best of human emotions. Confronted with an enthusiastic red-nosed collector handing out leaflets saying "three pounds will save this woman's eyesight", most of us hand over the money or look embarrassed. Few of us shout: "*Three quid! You could* buy a tub of posh ice-cream for that."

This is why the Tories want to hand old people's homes over to charity. So we'll all feel guilty as the charities act like a gangster who's taken hostages, screaming: "I've got a room full of old people in here, so hand over the money in one hour or the wrinklies lose their pudding."

On top of which, charity gives encouragement, and the perfect excuse to people who enjoy being a public nuisance. "And *now on London Tonight* the story of how a group of students have been raising money for chicken-pox victims by walking up the High Street stuffing trifles down women's bras."

Obviously taxation is a better way of helping the poor than jangling buckets or wearing red noses. Which is why, if *the Government* really cares about something, it doesn't leave it to charity.

It's very unlikely there'll *ever be a night of Military* Relief, in which Sir Peter De La Billière and Nicholas Soames perform a route march with the Spice Girls to raise money for a tank. Followed by a group of celebrities in Cyprus playing football against the Army, with each in turn saying: "For these simple but happy soldiers our visit was the highlight of their whole lives, but let's not forget that they only have one rifle between them. Isn't that *terrible*?"

And to finish with, film of Terry Wogan on the road to Basra, saying: "All this was only possible because of your generosity."

SADLY though, it's quite clear that a Labour governmnet will be just as keen to avoid tax as a way of raising money, though they differ slightly from the charity approach. Instead the Health Service will be paid for by a *series of £500 dinners at the* Hilton. Tony and Cherie will introduce Richard Wilson to conduct an auction, and meanwhile a nervous surgeon will be telling the family of a heart-attack patient: "I'd say the chances are 50-50. If he gets over nine grand for Alan Shearer's shirt we can operate." Then a woman waiting *for a hip replacement* will be told: "Sorry love, we're going to have to cancel it. See, they've sold one ticket less than they hoped because Stephen Fry's pissed off to Belgium again."

And charity will continue along its pessimistic path of accepting that we'll never get the Government to cough up, so we'd better jangle those buckets. Imagine if Robin Hood had been persuaded to pursue the Comic Relief strategy. His signature tune would have to be:

Robin Hood, Robin Hood riding through the nation,
Robin Hood, Robin Hood and his charitable foundation,
Takes from the poor,
Gives some of it back to the poor,
Robin Hood, Robin Hood, Sir Robin Hood.

Mark Steel is a comedian, broadcaster and author of *It's Not A Runner Bean* (Do-Not Press, £5.99)

With Albania on the brink of civil war, **Edi Rama** laments the loss of his country – and blames Western Europe for continuing to back the unscrupulous Sali Berisha

To find my country

WHEN I came into this world, I found two atheist parents and a Catholic grandmother, the daughter of a Venetian woman and an Albanian man from the *Catholic community of* Shkodra. This grandmother is the reason I learned to speak Italian and Albanian simultaneously, and the reason I was able to read Dante, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Proust and Nietzsche during the long night of the Albanian dictatorship. These great thinkers and champions of free speech *spoke to me secretly* in Italian at the end of those nights when the Albanians, locked in the bunker of the paranoia of their bloodthirsty dictator, were trying to intercept the Italian TV channels with the most sophisticated of antennas.

Italian television was our only window to the free world. Our dreams of freedom took on the most magical shapes as we stared at the small screen where the Martians from beyond the sea used *to appear*. What the Albanians would not invent to contact the closest planet of the free world!

The trip to this other planet began to materialise in the shape of a Biblical exodus in 1990. *For the first time*, we saw with our eyes that the earthly Martian reality did not look at all like the virtual reality our dream antennas had brought to us. We found ourselves locked in the Italian *football stadiums of* Brindisi and Bari. After beating us to near death with batons, they promised to bring us to wealthy Northern Italy. In fact, the proposed chartered flights that were supposed to bring us North brought us back East to the same prison we were born into, and where, it seems, we are destined to die. We were back in Albania, but this time under the leadership of a former Stalinist become democrat.

"This is no longer a prison, but a free country that walks confidently towards democracy," said the representa*tives of Western realpolitik*. They closed their eyes completely, first to the symptoms of the new authoritarian regime in Tirana, and later to the totalitarian phantom that revealed itself fully in the manipulated parliamentary elections of May 26, 1996.

Some years ago, the leader of the socialist opposition, Fatos Nano, was arrested and thrown in jail after a farcical trial. Europe's silence helped *to ensure this absurd verdict* and the final damnation of the opposition as a group of former Communists responsible for the crimes of the former era, even though Berisha himself had been a distinguished member of Enver Hoxha's Communist party for 25 years. Consecrated by Europe as the best leader in Albania, Berisha led the whole society into a vicious circle of fear and corruption. He arbitrarily privatised state property to enrich his supporters, and imprisoned journalists and militants in the opposition. He fired professors who didn't show their loyalty and attacked, with metal pipes, writers and artists who dared to raise their voices against the *decline of democracy. Indiffer*ent to the daily violation of human rights, Europe lost no time in congratulating the strong man of Tirana.

He fired professors and attacked writers who dared to raise their voices against the decline of democracy

For the European *realpolitik*, Berisha would guarantee stability in the Balkans. That he would not draw too much attention to human-rights abuses against Albanians in the former Yugoslavia and Macedonia was enough for them. Meanwhile, within Albania, *the former dictator*ship's shadow began to appear once again. Numerous appeals of the opposition and certain intellectuals were heard only in Washington, not in Europe. The Italian and German ambassadors exer*cised pressure on OSCE/* ODIHR observers not to invalidate the May 1996 elections and to bury their report in the drawers of *realpolitik*. Europe betrayed every principle on which its democracy was founded and continued to hold Berisha by the hand.

His supposed economic miracle was conjured out of pyra*mid schemes*, and the people's passion for immediate wealth. Above all it was built out of arms and drug trafficking in an arrangement between the government and a mafia willing to pay for liberty of movement within Albania. And the scandalous violation of the embargo against Serbia supplied that country with oil.

Meanwhile, Albania is one step away from civil war, and is being asphyxiated by Beri*sha's secret-police dictator*ship. From the beautiful Italy of our dreams comes the news that in Albania there exists no threat to personal safety and thus no requests for political exile will be considered. Several days ago, an Italian official said: "Berisha is a modern leader."

Recently, Albania's one independent newspaper, Koha Jone, was burned down at night by secret police. All that remains of the building is a *saying written* on the burned wall: "European friends: help us to find a country".

Edi Rama, aged 32, is a leading Albanian painter and writer. He lost his professorship at Tirana's Academy of Art last year for writing articles critical of the president, and two months ago was badly beaten by unknown assailants in Tirana. He is now living in Paris

The last word on Last Orders

Salman Rushdie attacks the press over the Graham Swift 'plagiarism' accusation

THIS week's Graham Swift furore is an object lesson in how the press can whip a story out of almost nothing, and make a decent man's life hell. First, an ailing newspaper, looking for a scandal to boost sales, happens upon a *sour* letter, published weeks earlier by an obscure academic in Australia, accusing the popular Booker winner, Graham Swift, of something odorously close to plagiarism: the "substantial borrowing" of the structure of his novel from William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying. The paper, the Independent on *Sunday*, *maliciously* makes this its front-page lead story, and we're off.

All the national broadsheets then gleefully pick the story up. There's one small problem: they can't find a single person to support the Aussie sourpuss's accusations. People point out that books have always been influenced by other books. That Swift's Last Orders, in terms of its language, characters, human purposes and mood, stands triumphantly on its own artistic feet.

BUT the British press hasn't had this much fun with a writer's reputation since Martin's Teeth. If they can't get him *on the primary charge*, of plagiarism, they go for the next best thing. A Booker judge confesses he hasn't read the Faulkner, and that's enough. If the judges had known, the papers now speculate, Swift wouldn't have won his prize.

Never mind, then, that the attack is plain wrong: *Swift's structure isn't very* like Faulkner's, anyway. The Faulkner story has no central narrator, and is told by 15 different voices speaking in no particular pattern. The Swift has a *primary narrator*, who narrates all the chapters headed by place-names, as well as some under his own name; perhaps two-thirds of the book in total. Around him is clustered a group of six other voices.

But by now the scandal is self-perpetuating. The literary world's simple insistence on the *facts* is described as an establishment closing ranks. Catherine Bennett, on this page, presented the Aussie prof as a geekish lone voice of uncomfortable truth, and *jeered at the "lofty indulgence"* Swift is allegedly being shown by "literature's Howard League". What Swift has done, in her ill-expressed opinion, is nothing less than "plundering".

Thus an ignorant attack is turned by *laziness* and spite into a kind of truth. Can it be that writers are only interesting to the media when they can be abused? If so, Graham Swift has just moved into the big time.

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Salman Rushdie's latest book is *The Moor's Last Sigh* (Vintage)

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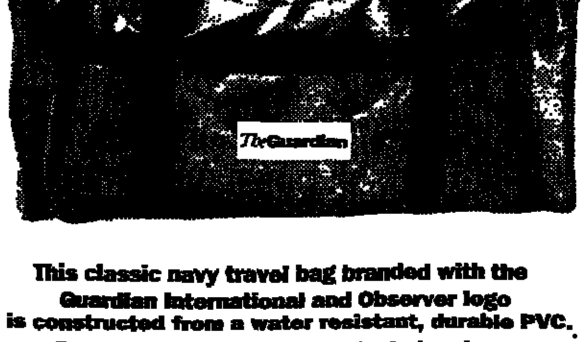

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Earl of Listowel

Peer at dawn of partition

THE 5th Earl of Listowel, who has died aged 90, was the virtually unknown Fabian liberator of India, Pakistan and Burma. As Secretary of State for India in 1947, he oversaw partition and the transfer of power on behalf of the Labour prime minister Clement Attlee, receiving a manuscript letter fortnightly from the British Viceroy, Viscount Mountbatten on whom the spotlight was focused as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs murderously rioted on the subcontinent.

Although "Billy" Listowel rarely spoke or wrote about it, he was proud of Britain's role in yielding power without the bitter colonial wars of the French and Dutch in Indo-China and Indonesia. In a rare letter in 1989 he defended Mountbatten against a nasty review of Mountbatten's *Diaries* by Auberon Waugh. Mountbatten, he pointed out, had been convinced that a handover to nationalist leaders was the only route after he had occupied Indonesia and Indo-China in 1945, but had to keep his views secret from Winston Churchill, a hard-bitten imperialist and by then leader of the Conservative opposition.

Unlike his predecessor, Lord Wavell, in 1947, Mountbatten had secured the acceptance of partition from Muslim and Congress leaders and persuaded Churchill not to oppose the India Independence Bill. "It is surely to his lasting credit that we left India better liked than ever before, and without causing continent-wide civil strife."

In 1948, the shy and modest Earl, as Secretary of State for Burma, supervised the departure from the Commonwealth of that country, under his friend, soon-murdered Aung San, the father of its present democratic leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. Having succeeded in wiping out his two previous offices, he was named in 1948 Labour's first minister of state for colonial affairs, a post he held until the 1950 General Election.

In 1957, he was appointed Governor-General of Ghana, during Harold Macmillan's Conservative administration, a post he held until 1960. Kwame Nkrumah, prime minister of the first African state to achieve independence from Britain, had specifically asked for Listowel to be given the job.

Despite these achievements, his modesty and shyness made him almost unknown even among fellow Labour peers for whom he acted for the next 30-odd years as the longest-serving deputy speaker and deputy chairman of committees, two of a score of posts that enable the House of Lords to act as a second chamber. When I went up to him at last summer's Labour peers' party to remind him that I had interviewed him 49 years before as a young foreign correspondent en route to India, I found him as courteous and modest as ever. Afterwards a few Labour peers asked me the name of the slight, grey and balding peer.

They had missed an old but exciting story of youthful rebellion. Born in London to the 4th Earl of Listowel (an Irish peerage), he had shocked his very Conservative father by turning Fabian socialist very young. At Eton he debated in favour of abolishing the House of Lords against young Quintin Hogg, later Lord Hailsham. At Balliol College Oxford, he joined the Fabian Society. His father blamed the university for this and transferred him to Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he joined the Cambridge University Labour Party.

When his father was killed in 1931, his will left the family fortune of £500,000 to Billy's younger brother, John Hare, who became a Tory MP, and minister and committed suicide as Lord Blakenham. Billy only inherited the Irish title which allowed him to sit in the Lords as Baron Hare from 1931. His maiden speech in 1932 was on colonial liberation.

This was at the time when Ramsay Macdonald had split the Labour Party, forming the National government with the Tories. Billy sat with five other peers in opposition. In the 1930s, he was active in various anti-fascist organisations and after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. In 1937, he was elected as a London county councillor for East Lewisham, and remained on the LCC until 1946.

When war came he volunteered for the Army but was turned down on medical grounds. In 1941 he was commissioned in the Intelligence Corps — because of his wide travels in 1930s Europe.

Stationed in London, he could attend the shrunken House of Lords. He did any job the Labour Party assigned him, including that of whip 1941-44. In 1944, he became the only Labour peer in the wartime coalition government as deputy leader of the Lords and under-secretary to the India Office. When Labour won its landslide victory in 1945, Listowel became Postmaster-General until 1947 when he took over the Indian portfolio. After the 1950 election, he was joint-parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries until the 1951 Conservative victory.

He had only two constant themes apart from colonial liberation: he was president of the Euthanasia Society, and president of the League Against Cruel Sports. Although he attended the Lords regularly until he grew feeble in his late eighties, he seldom spoke, even on these subjects.

The most colourful thing about this slight and grey rebel aristocrat was the nature of the women he wed. The first was the dynamic rightwing Hungarian propagandist, Judy Listowel, born in Budapest as Marffy-Mantuano — a very un-Hungarian name. They had a daughter. His second wife, Stevie Wise, was a Toronto jazz singer, who also gave him a daughter. It was his third wife, Pamela, the ex-hairdresser daughter of a Croydon bus driver, formerly married to a professional boxer, who gave him two sons, and a daughter. His eldest son inherits the title, not many weeks before Labour plans to abolish the rights of hereditary peers, with the late Earl's full approval.

Andrew Roth

Listowel . . . in costume for his installation as an honorary chief in Ghana where he was the last Governor-General

Sir Ludovic Kennedy writes: In 1935 the Earl of Listowel was a founder member of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society — the first such organisation in the world — and he became its longest-serving president. He was elected in 1951, resigned in 1980 but was invited to take up the position again in 1983, and held the post until 1995 when he retired in favour of "a younger person who can perhaps play a more active role in pursuing the society's aims".

His commitment to the movement was part of his devotion to human rights. His wisdom, political experience and charm inspired our members through many ups and downs in public attitudes. He had the satisfaction of seeing the VES grow from a fringe affair with a handful of members and derisory funds to a 20,000-membership and assets of £1 million.

William Francis Hare, 5th Earl of Listowel, politician; born September 28 1906; died March 12 1997

Maurice Goldsmith

For the love of science

IT WAS perhaps natural that the science writer Maurice Goldsmith, who has died aged 83, should have been attracted to the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organisation, Unesco. After the war in Paris as Unesco's science editor, he found a home for his ideas about science's social significance and about the need to harness it in the service of all.

Maurice's central European parents arrived in Britain in 1913. He graduated from the London School of Economics when issues of right and wrong appeared dramatically clear. He loathed fascism and since journalism was his chosen field, he saw the need to expose the truth behind the public words of the British Union of Fascists. His success was assured when, at a Trafalgar Square rally, the BUF's leader, Sir Oswald Mosley, proclaimed there to be a traitor in their midst who must be found and silenced. Maurice had infiltrated the BUF and his stories regularly made the front pages.

During the war he was involved in the army's first application of social sciences, devising officer selection tests.

Before coming to Unesco, Maurice spent his Saturdays as night editor on the Sunday paper, *Reynolds News*, owned by the Co-operative Society, but communicating science was his real passion. He was a co-founder of the Association of British Science Writers and was the science correspondent of the mass circulation weekly *Illustrated* magazine. When television came into its own, in the mid-1950s he was there too. His *Meet the Professor* pioneered science on commercial television.

He used the written word to express ideas in verse as fluently as he did in prose in his biographies, *J D Bernal*, *Frédéric Joliot-Curie* and *Joseph Needham*. In *The Science Critic* Maurice argued for a journalist who served science much as a theatre, film or art critic functions.

When he returned to Britain after Unesco, he launched a series of publications on science for young people. One such, Science Teacher, still exists, retitled, as a magazine for schools throughout the Commonwealth. It was during the 1960s that, inspired by J D Bernal's work on the history of science, Maurice launched and became the director of what is now the International Science Policy Foundation. He was widely recognised for his contribution to the cause of communicating science, including awards from the Royal Society of Arts, Scientific American and from Unesco, the Niels Bohr Gold Medal.

He campaigned to improve scientific literacy throughout the world and played a key part in founding the Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators. He edited Science in Parliament, the journal of the parliamentary and scientific committee, and Outlook on Science Policy and was the founding editor of Science and Public Policy. He wrote or edited 26 books.

He was a close friend of the novelist and scientist C P Snow. "Most people don't know the innumerable things he has started all over the field of science, or of peripheral science," said Snow, "as a labour of love quite unrecognised by society."

Dr Federico Mayor
Director-general, Unesco

Maurice Goldsmith, science writer, born July 15, 1913; died March 2, 1997

Letters

Andrew Hdcroft writes: To expand upon Vivian Levett's response to the obituary of Walter Ritchie, *(Letter, February 21)* there is at least one other piece by him still to be seen in Coventry — St Christopher at the school of that name in Allesley Old Road. Moreover, the visitor seeking his precinct bridge and fountain panel will search in vain in the original site — they were moved to the Herbert Art Gallery in Jordan Well on the demolition of the municipal fountain. His first professional work is still easily visible in the garden of his former house on Rosemary Hill, Kenilworth, and like the St Christopher "worth traveling to see".

Mary Benson writes: Among Oscar Lewenstein's *(obituary, February 28)* exciting achievements was the Fugard season at the Royal Court in 1973 From South Africa. Athol Fugard brought the plays he had created with John Kani and Winston Ntshona, *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* and *The Island*, as well as his *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* with Ben Kingsley and the great Yvonne Bryceland.

Birthdays

Prince Albert of Monaco, 39; Sir Kenneth Alexander, chancellor, Aberdeen University, 75; Pam Ayres, poet, 50; Ian Bruce, Conservative MP, 50; Michael Caine, actor, 64; Jasper Carrott, comedian, 52; Billy Crystal, actor/director, 50; Prof Sir Colin Dollery, physician, pro-vice chancellor for medicine, University of London, 66; Alan Elliott, chief constable, Cumbria, 53; Quincy Jones, bandleader, composer, 64; Sir Gavin Laird, trade unionist, 64; Lord Marsh, former chairman, British Rail, [illegible]; Bill Owen, actor, 83; Tessa Sanderson, javelin thrower, 41; Anthony Smith, president, Magdalen College, Oxford, 59; John Stephenson, cricketer, 32; Rita Tushingham, actress, 55.

Death Notices

BROWNING, Robert died peacefully in the Royal Free Hospital on 11th March. Funeral to take place on Thursday 20th March at 1pm at Golders Green Crematorium. Enquiries to J.H. Kenyon on 0171 794 3[illegible]

MORAGAS Fernando, peacefully Ascot Lodge Nursing Home, Sheffield, March 11th, aged 94 years (retired reader the University of Sheffield). Dearly loved husband of the late Sybil and a loved father and grandfather. Funeral enquiries to Alfred Dunham & Son Ltd Funeral Directors, Dronfield (tel: 01246 290 351)

O'BRIEN Oswald, 8.4.28 - 9.3.97 sadly missed by his much loved wife and son David, who was also his good friend. All those who wished to remember his [illegible] and friendship, please join Fr and David at St Augustine's Church, Darlington at 2.30pm on Tuesday 18th March. [illegible] to Co-operative Funeral Service, Darlington

STONE, Sheila Sushella, Teacher and Writer, suddenly but peacefully in hospital on March 10th 1997. Dearly loved by husband Michael, children Robert and [illegible], family and friends. Funeral service at Holy Innocents, Fallowfield, Manchester on Monday March 17th at 10am, followed by committal at Manchester Crematorium 11.30am. Family flowers only please. Donations if desired to Holy Innocents, The British Diabetic Association or The British Heart Foundation. All enquiries to Levenshulme Funeral Services, Levenshulme, Manchester 0161 224 7376

Birthdays

Ian, Happy 45th Birthday! Ring Nb 00498161183468.

■To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4129 between 9am and 3pm Mon-Fri

Shireen Akbar

United in a Mughal tent

WHEN the Victoria and Albert Museum puts up its spectacular *Shamiana: the Mughal Tent* this June, the one person most responsible will not be there. Shireen Akbar, who devised the project, has died of cancer aged 52.

Head of the V&A's adult and community department, Shireen had one foot inside the museum's splendid edifice, and the other outside in the south Asian communities. One result of a connection which brought benefits to both sides will be seen, at its most striking, in the *Shamiana* exhibition. Its genesis was the V&A's fine south Asian textile collection and the image of the embroidered Mughal tent. The tent was, for Shireen, a symbol of both migration and resourcefulness. What better theme to use for a textile project involving women who had themselves migrated?

The Mughal tent project started when a few women's groups — largely, but not exclusively, Asian — were shown round the museum's magnificent south Asian collection by Shireen. Its existence staggered many of the women. They began to draw their own designs and to design and stitch collaborative panels that could be part of their own Mughal tent: young girls stitched in air-letters and telephones; older people rediscovered stitches that had almost been forgotten.

From small beginnings in 1991, the tent finally included 65 panels made specially by 800 women in nine different countries. It is estimated that whole families have been involved — in one way or another — in making the panels and that around 5,000 people have been affected.

The Mughal tent is not Shireen's sole achievement. But its deft and imaginative combination of different agendas, brought together through tact and understanding, is a metaphor for Shireen's own life.

Born Shireen Hasib in Calcutta, her family moved to Bangladesh where she grew up and went to college. After marriage, she came to Britain and started a Cambridge postgraduate diploma.

Her heart was in community development, particularly with women from Bangladesh. In Tower Hamlets community education she set up the first Asian girls' youth group and developed arts projects. In 1985 she suggested a Bangladeshi textile exhibition to the Whitechapel Art Gallery. It materialised in 1988 as *Woven Air* and, said the Embroiderers' Guild recently, made a profound impact on textile makers in this country.

In 1987 there was the Commonwealth Institute's *Arts and Crafts of Bengal*. Shireen helped organise what was again the first major exhibition of its kind and also managed to secure funding so that the art objects stayed in London as a resource for Tower Hamlets.

Shireen became the V&A's south Asian education officer in 1988. She was unsure what sort of impact she would be able to make but the appreciative backing of the department's staff and the then director Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, reassured her.

The legacy and example of the work she established at the V&A — which earned her an MBE — has inspired other museums trying to include and reflect fresh communities. Shireen was separated from her husband. Her daughter graduates from Oxford this summer. She had warmth, charm and a commitment to challenge racism and stereotypes. Shireen was determined to bring worlds together — and succeeded.

Naseem Khan

Shireen Akbar, community arts and education officer, born July 13, 1944; died March 8, 1997

Shireen Akbar (pointing) with schoolchildren at the Victoria and Albert Museum

Ross Lee Finney

Midwestern epic

ROSS Lee Finney, who has died aged 90, was a composer whose music, despite its intricate infrastructure, was marked by a strongly lyrical character, even in its strictest applications of Bergian 12-tone technique. His work was concerned with contrasts: the essentially tonal surface of the pieces is underpinned by complex, strictly ordered and detailed forms which give greater depth and meaning to the broader shape of the music. He believed that no work of art could be understood from a single point of view, but only through the structures of opposites.

Finney held a number of important academic appointments. He taught many young composers and musicians during 26 years as head of composition at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Finney was born and raised in Minnesota. His early encounters with midwestern folk music left a lasting impression. After the University of Minnesota he was a pupil of Nadia Boulanger in Paris for a year. Further study followed with Alban Berg (1931), Roger Sessions (1934-5) and, in Italy, Gian Francesco Malipiero (1937).

He supported himself by teaching in the music faculty at Smith College in Northampton, Massachussetts. His reputation as a composer grew with a series of mid-1930s pieces including a violin concerto, two early piano sonatas and a vocal work *Bleheris* for tenor and orchestra. In 1940 he moved to Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley and in 1943 his *Symphony no 1, Communique*, was published, joining a powerful host of American "war" symphonies. Finney's music remained firmly rooted in tonality, but by 1950 he began experimenting with the 12-tone system and his mature style began to emerge, given added impetus by a series of important commissions, including one for solo violin, from Yehudi Menuhin. His *Symphony no 2* (1959) features a 12-tone row which determines not only pitch organisation but also rhythmic structure. The composer said the piece is "sometimes tender, sometimes grotesque and bitter, sometimes humorous and capricious". The symphony was played by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy, who took it on tour throughout the eastern US. Finney immediately set about his *Third Symphony* (1960), which he dedicated to Ormandy, who duly performed it. The first three symphonies were all recorded by the Louisville Orchestra in the late 1960s. A *Fourth Symphony* followed in 1972 and together they form the core of his output.

A number of vocal and choral pieces appeared during the 1960s, and in 1969 he wrote one of his finest pieces, the *Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Winds*. This is based on an eight-tone scale, with interlocking triads. In many ways it represents the ultimate exposition of "complementarity" or simultaneous treatment of opposites.

After his retirement from Ann Arbor in 1973, Finney continued to compose, reverting once again to the midwestern-style he favoured in his earlier years, albeit overlaid with serial techniques. "I have always wanted my music to 'sing', whatever devices or systems I might use in composing it," he once said. Finney won many awards and fellowships, which enabled him to travel widely. In 1967 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Bret Johnson

Ross Lee Finney, composer, born December 23, 1906; died February 4, 1997

Jackdaw

Down to earth

THE new head of President Clinton's National Economic Council recently gave — received — an impromptu lesson in protocol. At a White House function not long ago, Gene Sperling was overheard lecturing a child on the importance of demeanor. "Gravitas," the rather petite, youthful-looking Sperling was telling the boy, who, according to a source looked to be about 10 years old. "It's never too early to learn it. Gravitas." Just then, says the source, someone walked up to the child and said: "Aren't you the new head of the National Economic Council?" Sperling shot back, "That's not funny!"

Talking down in the US Esquire *magazine.*

Tight clip

THE clipping of poodles is a very ancient practice. The trim undoubtedly comes from the poodle's traditional use as a game-retrieving water dog. The hindquarters were shaved because this hair would have been a hindrance in the water, and the area behind the ribs was clipped to facilitate efficient swimming.

Tufts of hair were left on the joints to keep them warm, while the long hair over the heart made the dog more buoyant. When the dog emerged from the water, this hair also provided warmth. Coloured ribbon was used to tie up the forelock so the dog could see his quarry easily, and so the owners could follow a particular dog as it worked in the water.

For Cruft's fans, this type of information can be found at www.crufts.org.uk. Printed in Net *magazine.*

Knifeline

WILL it be the surgeon or his apprentice who whips out your appendix? A report in the *British Journal of Surgery* reveals that most appendectomies are performed late in the day by trainee surgeons. And though a bright young trainee may be preferable to a consultant who hasn't touched an appendix in 15 years, do you really want to be the recipient of someone's first incision? If you don't like it, you need to decide whether to walk out, go private or wait for your name to rise to the top of the waiting list again.

Good Housekeeping *warns of the perils of the student knife-wielder.*

Student surgery . . . GH

Fat ball

YOU do encounter fatties this side of the Atlantic, but there aren't nearly as many of them, and they're somehow not quite the same. Europe's chief fatty at the moment is Chancellor Kohl, the only current Western leader to have written a cookbook. (He was once caught eating steak and chips after an insufficiently nourishing state banquet.) Kohl, however, is no American-style butterball, but rather a two-metre tall 350lb incarnation of will, whose size is one of his most important assets. A German journalist told me how Kohl physically intimidates people: "He fixes you vit ze evil eye of ze big old elephant," he explained.

President Clinton would probably be a no-joke fatty if he had his druthers — pizza deliveries to the White House go up 18 per cent when Hillary is away, Richard Klein, author of *Eat Fat*, reports — but as his problems with sleaze deepens he has an ever-increasing need to seem classy, which means thin. He is 20 pounds lighter than when he was first elected.

There's a wonderful poem by Les Murray, terrific poet and world-class fatty, called *Quintets by Robert Morley*. The poem begins:

Is it possible that hyper-
ventilating up Parnassus
I have neglected to pay tribute
to the Stone Age Aristocracy?
I refer to the fat.

This raises the question of who were the first fatties. It may be that — without wanting to go into speculation a la songlines — our genetic inheritance predisposes us to eat as much as we can, on the basis that we are designed to exercise all day: you know, hunter-gathering, starting fires, killing mammoths, all that shit. Fatness in that context would have been very rare, and also a tremendously good sign — boys, we've finally got those sabre-toothed tigers whupped. But we don't now have that balance of calorific intake and expenditure, and seem to find it difficult to obtain; our lives are extraordinarily sedentary, by world-historical standards, so that if we want to keep our weight down we have to seek that oxymoronic thing, a rational level of appetite. Add to that the fact that we in the western world are some of the first people ever to live without fear of starvation. We know — or rather we think we know — that whatever happens we won't go hungry. Perhaps the purpose of all our doomed dieting is not to lose weight but to induce hunger, as if it were a sensation that we find hard to live without. After all, most things about fatness tend to be counter-active.

John Lanchester muses on fatties in the London Review of Books.

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk; fax 0171-713 4366; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Emily Sheffield

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Salvesen family rebel fails, page 12

Tomorrow: That man and the Pru

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FinanceGuardian

Driven mad . . . Kyriacos Papouis who is at the centre of the interest options scandal which has prompted NatWest to introduce emergency curbs on traders PHOTOGRAPH: DAILY MAIL

NatWest curb on traders

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

NATWEST Bank yesterday introduced a raft of emergency controls to curb its interest rate options traders after admitting it is facing losses of £90 million which it failed to detect over more than two years.

Derek Wanless, the chief executive, who has suspended four more senior dealers, said the NatWest Markets black hole was £40 million bigger than first expected because the company was forced to disclose the disaster before it was sure of the full damage.

The bank, which at one time thought it might have to rewrite its entire accounts for the past two years, declined to comment on the future for its auditors, KPMG.

Mr Wanless admitted there were "lots of lessons" for NatWest and other banks to learn from this incident, but he hinted that rivals had had greater success at keeping similar disasters out of the limelight. His suggestion that losses from complex derivative trading are routinely swept under the carpet will add to concerns that a few dealers are running out of control.

NatWest said one advantage to the affair being in the open was that NatWest would be able to take quick sanctions if necessary without having to worry about secrecy. Often, action is stifled and offenders paid off to keep details about trading derelictions away from the market.

Although NatWest has had to revise so quickly the extent of its losses Mr Wanless attempted to reassure investors that the mispricing scandal was confined to one area.

In addition to the suspensions, which include Phil Wise who recently took over as chief administrative officer, NatWest will withhold £8 million of bonuses from the handful of interest rate option traders.

Martin Owen, a former Salvation Army officer who has been chief executive of NWM since 1992, said he was prepared to forgo two-fifths of his £500,000 performance bonus for last year which he earned on top of a £300,000 salary.

NatWest has suspended Neil Dodgson, who was directly in charge of supervising Kyriacos Papouis, the trader at the centre of the scandal who left NWM in December after five years at the bank.

Mr Wanless said forensic accountants and lawyers were hoping soon to conclude phase two of their investigation which would look more closely at the management deficiencies and the motivation of the traders involved.

He has drafted in two of NatWest's biggest hitters to oversee the operation until finalisation of a merger with the recently acquired Greenwich Capital to create a global debt markets division. Peter Hall, president of NatWest markets will assume Mr Wise's role as administrative officer while Vincent Tomasi, head of US debt capital markets, will become acting head of global debt derivatives.

The suspended executives, who also include Ian Gaskell, Christophe Lanson and Jean-François Nguyen, who was reportedly in line for a £3 million bonus, are receiving their full pay until completion of the bank's investigation. Mr Wanless said suspension did not imply guilt but would allow executives, some of whom were making large financial decisions daily, to spend more time helping the inquiry team.

The bank said the extent of the losses had been disguised by mispricing and the transfer of values between books of business but there was not any clear evidence of personal gain. Complicated computer programmes are used to model option prices, but traders have to make an assessment of volatilities. Fractional errors can result in very big losses in a market where NWM has increased its involvement from £4 billion worth of trades to £10 billion in a little over three years.

Lord Alexander, chairman of NatWest, which has been spending heavily to build up its risky investment banking business and which reiterated its commitment to the operation, promised there would be no cover-up and that "all appropriate action" would be taken.

The charge which NatWest expects to set against its first half figures will be £77 million after it has used the £8 million of bonuses and a £5 million provision to reduce the £90 million headline loss.

The market digested the latest revelation from the banking group by marking the shares down by 5½p to 738½p in the falling market.

Notebook

Testing times for Alexander's army

Alex Brummer

MANY watchers have been willing to give NatWest's management the benefit of the doubt as it stitched together an investment banking empire through a series of creative acquisitions on both sides of the Atlantic.

After all, the bank that was required to clear out much of its boardroom as a result of the Blue Arrow affair and recently wrote off £719 millions of shareholders' funds as a result of its unfortunate investment in NatWest Bankcorp, would certainly not put investors' cash and customers confidence at risk again.

It is already clear that it has. The danger signals were there when a clearing bank which makes a great deal of its money driving hard bargains with consumers and small businesses on the high street threw cash with reckless abandon at the deal-making boutique Hambro Magan, making many of its associates millionaires. Buying in the finest talents, questioners were told, is an expensive business.

One assumed that this time NatWest would get things right. The bank has a very talented chief executive in Derek Wanless, a high-profile chairman in Lord Alexander and a sensible hand on the tiller at NatWest Markets in Martin Owen. How wrong one can be.

Even as NatWest was reporting strongly improved profits at the investment bank for 1996, the first signs of a "black hole" in its huge derivatives book, which totals more than £10 billion, were being uncovered. Now we learn that the losses on interest-rate swaps may date back to 1994. NatWest felt compelled to disclose them only when reports began to circulate in the City that it was in for a Baring-style loss.

Fortunately for NatWest and its stakeholders, the loss appears to have settled at a relatively modest £90 million; but the investigation is not yet over and the costs have risen somewhat from the £50 million of the initial announcement.

Employees at NatWest branches who bring in so much of the bank's profits will no doubt wince when they see the bonus arrangements in NatWest's options trading unit, where £8 million was available to be shared by fewer than 10 people. Such out-of-scale incentives are precisely why the Bank of England has warned about bonus levels, and the regulators and the Bank should start to consider how they can back up the rhetoric with better transparency, disclosure and even, possibly, sanctions.

The real question that NatWest and its institutional shareholders need to ask themselves now is whether it was wise for the bank to head in the direction of investment banking — an already crowded field.

Is it responsible for a high street bank, where the face-to-face relationship with the customer is so crucial, to risk the confidence of its far broader range of stakeholders by running unnecessary risks in the derivatives markets?

Each of Britain's banks has adopted its own strategy for the 1990s, with varying success: Lloyds TSB has gone for bancassurance in a big way; HSBC aims at being a truly global banking institution; Barclays seeks to build on its international base and develop fund management through BZW, and NatWest wants to be JP Morgan.

Judging by recent experience, NatWest's move represents a profound mistake. Investment banks are not created out of thin air; they are built over decades with the assistance of strong management and control systems. Much of this seems to have been absent at NatWest Markets, otherwise it would not have been necessary to suspend four officials and put in place a new structure. Fortunately, NatWest Markets does have some high-quality systems and people in the derivatives area, in the form of Greenwich Capital.

However, restoring confidence is tricky. The decision by NatWest Markets chief Martin Owen to forgo £200,000 of his £500,000 bonus seems modest in the extreme, given that book value has had to be reduced by tens of millions. In much the same way as Keith Percy had to be sacrificed over the Peter Young affair at Morgan Grenfell Asset Management, Mr Owen should perhaps be looking to a new job outside investment banking.

Telecom titans

THE thirst shown by BT to become a global telecom power has not been quenched by its proposed merger with MCI. The decision to team with NTT of Japan in seeking to gain access to Singapore's second telecommunications licence shows a determination to break into the Far Eastern market, despite the failure of its efforts to merge with Cable & Wireless.

What is perhaps less recognised is that C&W already has a strong relationship with NTT in the Japanese hand-held phone market and has hopes of building on this relationship throughout the region. Among the western telecom groups, C&W is the the great power in the region, through Hong Kong Telecoms, which has one of the few state-of-the-art, digital, full-service telecommunications systems anywhere in the world.

Ideally, C&W's chief executive, Richard Brown, hopes to use the Hong Kong Telecoms link as a basis for building stronger ties with Beijing, soon to be the new landlord in Hong Kong. It will be fascinating then to see which of the UK's telecom titans is best able to become a dominant force in the region.

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INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

N Brown puts in Freemans order

Manchester firm to join mail order big boys, reports ROGER COWE

DIRECT mail specialist N Brown confirmed yesterday that it has been negotiating to buy Freemans from the struggling Sears group.

The £395 million deal will require a substantial share issue, which prompted the company to have trading in its shares suspended yesterday. A £250 million rights issue is expected, which would increase the number of N Brown shares by more than half.

The acquisition will transform the Manchester-based company chaired by Sir David Alliance, more than doubling its sales and pushing its share of the mail order market into double figures, not far behind second-placed Littlewoods. GUS remains clear market leader.

Sears's planned sale of Freemans to Littlewoods broke down last week after the deal was referred to the Monopolies Commission. Littlewoods said it was not prepared to persevere while Sears was talking to other potential buyers.

Sears is keen to complete a deal quickly, without waiting for a MMC go-ahead, because it has promised disgruntled shareholders a £410 million handout once a sale is completed.

N Brown is believed to have negotiated an exclusivity agreement with Sears and is prepared to match the £395 million offered by Littlewoods.

A tiny but very profitable player, concentrating on direct mail catalogues and with a customer base primarily in older age groups, N Brown's sales last year were £231 million, compared to Freemans' £531 million. But its profits of £31 million were not far short of Freemans' £38 million.

N Brown believes it can also succeed with Freemans' traditional agency sales operation, under which agents receive discounts and credit on their purchases even though many sell only to their immediate family.

N Brown will lose access to Sears' brands such as Miss Selfridge, but the company believes it can boost the Freemans' business by applying its skills in market segmentation which helped it to build the direct mail business throughout the 1990s. In 1990 its sales were only £108 million, producing £12 million profit.

The company also sees a good fit between Freemans' younger customer base and its own market, which it believes will provide new direct mail opportunities.

Fire sale by a French bank could spark record Irish bid

Julia Finch

TROUBLED French state-owned bank Crédit Lyonnais is to sell its 54 per cent stake in Irish finance and leasing company Woodchester, it emerged yesterday.

The prospect of a sell-off has driven Woodchester's share price up by more than 50 per cent in the past six months. It is likely to lead to a full bid for the company, which at more than IR£600 million (£588 million) would be a record for the Irish stock exchange.

Crédit Lyonnais has been forced into the sale by the European Union. It must divest itself of businesses outside France to secure a rescue, which some think could cost the French government Fr150 billion (£16.3 billion).

The announcement came as Woodchester announced profits up 22 per cent to IR£44 million and business up a further 30 per cent in the first two months of this year.

US leasing company GE Capital is tipped to make a bid and NatWest has also been suggested as a potential buyer but yesterday a bank insider ruled out any move and the bank said "no comment".

GE, on the other hand, has approached both Crédit Lyonnais and Woodchester in the past 12 months.

Woodchester's shares climbed 5p to 277.5p yesterday, compared with 218p at the turn of the year, but analysts believe bidders will have to offer a healthy premium on the current price.

Under stock exchange rules any buyer would have to offer the same price to all shareholders, unless they can win a special dispensation.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 1.96	France 8.855	Italy 2,844	Singapore 2.34
Austria 18.505	Germany 2.628	Malta 0.598	South Africa 8.82
Belgium 54.23	Greece 415.00	Netherlands 2.947	Spain 221.75
Canada 2.121	Hong Kong 12.02	New Zealand 2.213	Sweden 11.94
Cyprus 0.786	India 57.06	Norway 10.53	Switzerland 2.257
Denmark 10.105	Ireland 0.89	Portugal 289.50	Turkey 193,730
Finland 7.935	Israel 5.36	Saudi Arabia 5.89	USA 1.5625

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

Coats chief exits as shrinkage continues

OUTLOOK/Textile leader's profits slump after shake-up, reports **Roger Cowe**

NEVILLE Bain, chief executive of the textile group Coats Viyella for the past six years, resigned yesterday as he presented a slump in profits caused by the shake-up announced last year.

Mr Bain, aged 55, said he had decided last year that he wanted to begin a new stage of his career as a full-time non-executive director. "This shouldn't be seen in any way as negative about Coats Viyella," he said. "The reshaping phase is over and it is now moving into a growth phase. It needs someone with a five-year time horizon and that's not me."

The new chief executive, chosen from a shortlist of three, will be Michael Ost, who left the engineering group McKechnie in January after 10 years as chief executive. He will take over at the end of May.

Sir David Alliance, Coats's chairman, said: "I believe that Michael Ost will build on the firm foundation which is in place."

He also thanked Mr Bain for steering Britain's leading textile company through "an often difficult environment".

The record shows a continuation of the 30-year trend which has seen UK textile manufacturing shrink steadily under the combined weight of generally poor response to customer needs and low-cost manufacturing in developing countries.

Only 22,000 people among Coats's 68,000-strong work force are based in Britain. But Mr Bain was optimistic yesterday. Three-fifths of UK clothing sales, mainly to Marks & Spencer, are produced in the UK, which has the advantage of fast response for European markets, offsetting higher costs than those offered by developing countries.

He was bitter about European Union anti-dumping duties on "grey" cloth, which Coats imports for printing and finishing in the UK. "I get very emotional about it," he said.

But the bulk of Coats's business is manufacturing the thread that holds together clothes and other products, rather than making the clothing, curtains or duvets.

Thread manufacturing is expanding, however, in eastern Europe and the Far East. Coats already has mills in Hungary and Poland, which are performing well enough for the company to contemplate futher east European expansion.

Specialist thread is also now being produced in Vietnam, as well as other locations in Asia.

Despite the upheavals, Mr Bain produced steady growth in sales until the past two years, when there were disposals of smaller operations such as Trutex clothing, Stiebel lace and the carpet business. Profits have been uneven, due mainly to reorganisation costs.

The 1994 figures were hit by a £51 million loss on the sale of yarn and carpets businesses. Last year's result suffered as a result of the £55 million required for a radical shake-up of production in home furnishings, clothing, fashion retailing and thread.

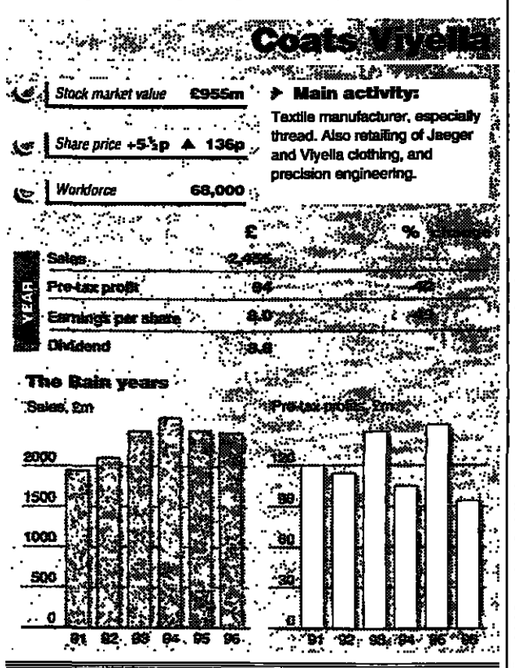
This included the controversial closure of the group's factory in Rainhill, near Liverpool, and the transfer of production abroad. But the closures have now happened, and the cost savings have begun to come through — faster than expected.

Even before these exceptional costs, however, profits were down. That was mainly because of poor business in Brazil and Turkey in the first half of the year, and the consequences of disruption in the clothing business.

The result was up to City expectations, nonetheless, resulting in a share price rise of 5½p to 136p.

Mr Bain said the main worry for the current year was the level of the pound. Apart from that, he believed he was bequeathing a healthy group which Mr Ost would have the chance of "fine-tuning".

His successor may also revisit the idea of spinning off businesses such as engineering and the Jaeger/Viyella fashion operation.



Another era . . . Shipyard workers at Gdansk, cradle of the Solidarity union that ended communist rule in Poland, mount vigil over burning tyres at road blocks whichhave been erected in an effort to preserve their jobs. The workers are protesting against the announcement of 3,700 job losses at the yard PHOTOGRAPH: JANEI SKARZYNSKI

Mirror clouds cash-call talk as results reflect cost of price war

Paul Murphy

MIRROR Group Newspapers maintained a determined silence yesterday in the face of rampant speculation that it is preparing a £300 million cash-raising exercise and mulling a bid for Birmingham-based publishing rival Midland Independent Newspapers.

Revealing year-end figures showing the effects of the rise in newsprint costs and the damage done by the newspaper price war, finance director James Allwood said Mirror Group had been subject to rumours of a cash call ever since the company was refloated on the stock market, after the Maxwell fiasco.

Group trading profits slipped from £107 million to £99 million in the 12 months to end-December, but an uplift at some of its associate ventures, such as the Mirror's 20 per cent holding in Scottish Television, allowed the company to claim a 6.6 per cent rise in pre-tax profits — before exceptional items — to £82.2 million.

Earnings per share before exceptionals, which included "the resolution of certain property-related issues" dating from the Maxwell era and a settlement with the Inland Revenue, rose 6.7 per cent to 14.3p. The total dividend is up 12.5 per cent to 4.5p.

The company said increased newsprint prices had been offset by cover price rises at the newspapers, and a recovery in advertising revenues. Losses at Newspaper Publishing, the publisher of the Independent where the Mirror has a 46 per cent stake, have been cut by almost half. Losses at Live TV, which now covers Birmingham, Liverpool and Edinburgh, as well as London, have been cut by 17 per cent.

David Montgomery: Media ambitions undiminished

In a statement, Mirror Group said it was in a "good financial position to make prudent investments for the future and to continue its strategy of creating a more broadly based media group".

While chief executive David Montgomery has effectively ruled out an approach to shareholders through a rights issue, media analysts suspect Mirror Group may be planning a bond issue. Sources indicated the company has considered a plan to issue new paper which would be exchangeable for the shares Mirror holds in Scottish TV.

Midland Independent said on Wednesday it had not held talks of "any substance" with any potential bidders, but the Mirror is known to have considered a raid on Midland's shares in late January. It is also reported to have approached Midland's biggest shareholders to see if they would be prepared to sell.

Salvesen crushes rebel shareholder

Ian King

CHRISTIAN Salvesen, the transport and distribution group, yesterday crushed a shareholder revolt organised by Sir Gerald Elliot, a former chairman of the company, and a member of the founding Salvesen family.

Sir Gerald, who claimed support from 14 per cent of shareholders, had opposed a £100 million special dividend payment by Salvesen and an extension of the group's borrowing powers.

At an extraordinary general meeting in Edinburgh, the Salvesen board — which also wants to demerge its Aggreko specialist hire business — triumphed, despite its proposals being defeated on a show of hands. Salvesen shares rose 9p to 312½p on the news.

After the two-hour meeting, in which Sir Gerald called for the resignation of chief executive Chris Masters, it emerged that the board had support from shareholders representing 55 per cent of those who voted.

Last night, 72-year-old Sir Gerald said he regretted the outcome of the meeting, but said it was clear that several City institutions were still unhappy with the way Salvesen was run.

In a statement, Sir Gerald said there was a clear contrast between the attitude of the institutions and of Salvesen's large body of private shareholders, who were deeply opposed to the board.

Sir Gerald paid tribute to John Grant, the former finance director at engineer Lucas Varity, who has been his choice to replace Mr Masters as chief executive.

He added: "It was a matter of fine judgment for the institutions whether or not to take the highly unusual step of rejecting the resolutions, and, in effect, replacing the chairman and chief executive.

"We have the institutions going one way and the private shareholders another."

In a separate development, Salvesen's chairman, Sir Alick Rankin, said he hopes the company was in talks to sell its American refrigeration business, CS Inc, adding that the sale would have a "major impact" on debt levels.

Sunday Business touts for a float

Paul Murphy

SUNDAY Business, the financial newspaper founded by maverick publisher Tom Rubython, is seeking a stockbroker to float the loss-making venture on the stock market.

Sources in the Square Mile indicated that Luke Johnson, the financier who leads a consortium which took control of the newspaper just before Christmas, has been touring the City looking for proposals to develop the business.

A source at the newspaper confirmed yesterday that a listing on the Alternative Investment Market was being considered, probably within 12 to 18 months, with staff being offered shares.

Mr Johnson is believed to have been told that unless Sunday Business is packaged with a number of profit-generating publishing ventures he faces little chance of generating interest from potential investors.

Mr Johnson, who has backed a string of stock market debutants and is chairman of PizzaExpress, was in New York on business yesterday and unavailable for comment.

However, word in the City is that he regrets his decision to become involved in the business and is looking to recoup his reported £250,000 investment as soon as possible, either through a flotation or sale of his stake.

In an attempt to cut costs, Mr Johnson recently asked staff to take a temporary 10 per cent pay cut, telling them: "It's time you stopped being journalists and started being capitalists."

He took over from northern dumper-truck magnate Gordon Brown — one of Mr Rubython's original backers, who ploughed about £1.3 million into the year-old venture before buying it back from the administrators for £30,000 last October.

Mr Rubython was ousted as editor in the autumn but continues to contribute to the paper. His successor, deputy editor Anil Bhoyrul, has also since departed, to be replaced in the editor's chair by news editor David Rydell, who has been with the publication since its launch.

While Mr Johnson has put a new management team in place at Sunday Business and shaken up the editorial team, sales are thought to have continued to fall, with recent reports suggesting a weekly total of 20,000, against the 150,000 or more originally predicted by Mr Rubython.

Insiders claim sales are closer to 50,000, that the paper is losing no more than £3,000 a week and is rapidly approaching break-even.

United takes the biscuit

Ian King

UNITED Biscuits, maker of Jaffa Cakes and Hula Hoops, has bounced back into the black following improvements in almost all of its main businesses.

The company, which has had a wretched few years battered by relentless competition from America's PepsiCo, reported full-year pre-tax profits of £24.4 million against a 1995 loss of £100.6 million after exceptional items.

Ignoring one-off items, mainly disposals, underlying profits more than doubled from £49.7 million to £109.1 million.

News of the profits, accompanied by a small increase in the dividend, delighted the City and sent United Biscuits shares up 11p to 248½p.

The chief executive, Eric Nicoli, said the group's new Go-Ahead range of low-fat products had been selling particularly well, while sales in Europe had been sharply higher over the second half.

Mr Nicoli said that for the first time in some years all the company's businesses were making a profit, though he identified several areas — including the UK crisps operation — where he felt there was room for improvement. There were no plans for further disposals, though he said it would not be ruled out as an option.

The group is set to step up its marketing activities in Australia, which has become the latest battleground with PepsiCo. United Biscuits, which has a 56 per cent share of the Australian snack market, has bought the rights to the Goosebumps television series, storming the ratings there and in the US, and is giving away souvenirs to compete with Pepsi's Star Wars Tazos.

The chairman, Colin Short, said: "We'd rather get customers to focus on the quality and value of our products than stuffing the bags with toys."

He would not comment on the legal battle over Asda's Puffin bar, an alleged copy of the Penguin brand.

Underside

Dan Atkinson

ONE OF your fund managers is a gerkin-munching rogue, another a publicity-crazed millionairess, so what do you do? Deutsche Morgan Grenfell heads for the sunshine, and the Hyatt Hotel on Grand Cyprus Boulevard, Orlando. We won't say "holiday", but a gaggle of top DMG brass have just returned from a week's golfing and general mooching in this most agreeable of locations. Two half-day seminars provided the justification for the trip (feel free to say "holiday"). The theme? How to cut costs.

HEART of Europe (1): Some final thoughts re our now disbanded Brussels Strike Force. Such as — does the Church know something Bundesbank president Hans Tietmeyer doesn't? Lighting a devotional candle in Brussels Cathedral costs 20 Belgian francs, four French francs, one guilder, one dollar and one German mark. That's right: $-DM parity, compared to 1.70 marks on foreign exchanges. Even in the Frankfurt temple of mammon that may sound just a shade overvalued. No sniggering in Threadneedle Street, though. Candles cost 50p, giving two marks to the pound. How our sorely oppressed exporters would love that!

THE OLD ones are still the best, as far as Ruth Evans, National Consumer Council director, is concerned. A conference this week on bringing gas-competition benefits to poor people (crazy thinking, but we like it) had a second chance to hear a speech she gave first in 1995. Why? We hear she wanted to say "I told you so" without the bother of penning a new address. Were she a radio programme, she'd be I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again.

HEART of Europe (2): The late Terry Nation at least lived long enough to see his futuristic killer dustbins move from screen to real world. Last week, we quizzed a top Commission official on prospects for the Euro. "There is a treaty," ran the reply. "It has been signed. The date is 1999." Same question, different phrasing, and same reply. By our third attempt: "There is a trea-ty! [lights flash on head; eye-stalk swivels] . . . The date is 19-9-9! Kill the Thals!" (OK, we made up that last bit).

MEANWHILE, one aspect of Red Nose Day — the organisers' exhortations to City types to ditch the grey suits and dress down "into casual gear" — looks likely to disappoint. Among supporters of the "dress down" initiative are the Bank of England and Mercury Asset Management. So big pix of Crazy Eddie and the Ice Maiden in their weekend clobber? Not exactly. MAM pledged support for the wheeze, but was less keen on a photo-shoot featuring vice-chairman Carol Galley: "We don't go in for personalities here, so we'll decline the offer." And the Bank? "The Governor will not be dressing down. He has to meet overseas visitors who might not understand why he wasn't wearing a tie."

Comic Relief laments: "We haven't been able to persuade anybody to do anything. They're happy to endorse Dress Down Day, but getting them to do anything silly has proved impossible." Richard Branson's number, anyone?

NO SILLINESS had been planned at the earnest sort of gathering at St James's Palace this week, featuring top industrialists attending one of those ethics seminars they're so fond of (especially after sacking a few million workers) to listen to, *inter alia*, Prince Charles urging them to be serious about the environment. A shame that the costly antique clock ticking away in the richly decorated conference room insisted on breaking into merry tinkles every 15 minutes.

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CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL

Chris Hawkins on the man who has made the big time after training hard for 20 years

The game of Chance turns to gold

FOR Noel Chance, it was the end of "a life sentence" after being forced to play second fiddle to the training elite in Ireland for far too long, when Mr Mulligan out-jumped and out-stayed the opposition in yesterday's Tote Cheltenham Gold Cup.

Wishy-washy in colour he may be, but there is nothing half-hearted about Mr Mulligan's attitude. Despite wandering up the run-in through exhaustion, he kept going valiantly to beat Barton Bank by nine lengths, with Dorans Pride half a length away third.

For Tony McCoy, his rider, it was a fantastic triumph, setting the seal on a monumental week during which he has also won the Arkle Chase and the Champion Hurdle.

"It took me 20 years to train 100 winners in Ireland," said Chance. "And when Michael Worcester gave me the opportunity to come to Lambourn to train privately for him I jumped at it."

But when Chance moved in to a small, wooden-boxed yard with a caravan for an office he must have had reservations, particularly when the first horses arrived — just three of them and two in no fit state to race.

One was Mr Mulligan, suffering from a broken vertebra in his neck after a fall at Newbury when trained by Kim Bailey. He spent three months in his box and the future looked grim.

"I never dreamt about the Gold Cup for him," said Chance. "The limit of my ambitions was getting him set up for a "touch" at Uttoxeter, which he landed."

Worcester, a man who has made his money making ice-cream cones, had bought Mr Mulligan in Ireland on the recommendation of Louise Cooper a noted judge of equine talent in the Emerald Isle.

"She told me not to come over and look at him because I wouldn't like him, but just to write out a cheque which I did for 18,000gns," said Worcester.

One jump ahead . . . Mr Mulligan and Tony McCoy are in the clear at the last fence in the Gold Cup, pursued by Barton Bank (left) and Dorans Pride PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

His faith has been rewarded but only after a catalogue of setbacks and disasters, the latest coming in the King George VI Chase at Kempton on Boxing Day when Mr Mulligan took a crashing fall at the last when running second to One Man.

"He had a massive haematoma on his quarters and after we fiddled around with vets for three or four weeks it was the physiotherapist, Mary Bromiley, who finally dispersed it working on it five times a day," explained the trainer.

"Then two weeks ago we took him to work at Newbury racecourse and he worked awful, so bad that we were worried Tony would get off him to ride Cyborgo.

"But he's never been a good worker and he needs to see a fence in front of him.

"Tony came to school him last weekend and he took off, jumping eight obstacles brilliantly, and I knew for the first time that we were really getting somewhere."

Mr Mulligan certainly got there yesterday, always lying handy as Dublin Flyer set the pace and taking over with a circuit to go.

"When I got past Brendan on Dublin Flyer he loved it in front and was always travelling from there," said McCoy.

By the time they came to the top of the hill Imperial Call, last year's winner, was out of contention as were Coome Hill, Danoli, Nahthen Lad and Banjo but creeping ever nearer was One Man.

Running down the hill One Man was cruising and although Barton Bank was battling on well it was the sleek grey who looked the big danger.

But in a virtual action replay of last year's race One Man went from cantering on the bridle to a beaten horse in half a dozen strides. Like last year he eventually finished sixth but Richard Dunwoody, his rider, said he went for 150 yards more this time.

Gordon Richards, his trainer, conceded that One Man does not stay and commented: "He ran a smashing race but proved once and for all that he doesn't stay and he'll never be asked to go beyond three miles again."

Barton Bank, at the age of 11, ran the race of his life and will now go for the Martell Cup at Liverpool followed by the Whitbread Gold Cup. But perhaps the performance with most significance for the future was Go Ballistic.

He finished a highly creditable fourth and will now go for the Martell Grand National. He was cut from 33-1 to 12-1 by Ladbrokes.

When the National is run Mr Mulligan will be in his box; maybe Aintree next year, but his job for this season is done and how well he did it.

Day of triumph for Walsh

Chris Hawkins

TED WALSH rode four Festival winners during a distinguished career as an amateur but could not compare the thrill with saddling Commanche Court to take the Elite Triumph Hurdle yesterday.

"That's the greatest moment of my racing life," said an exhilarated Walsh whose back will bear testimony to this victory for weeks so hard was it slapped by a hord of Irish admirers.

"We had a bit to find on his Irish form and I thought the ground might be a bit quick but apparently it was fast when he won the Austrian Derby."

Nicolas Clement, the French trainer, had charge of Commanche Court then but when Dermot Desmond, part-owner of Celtic Football Club, bought him he was sent to Walsh.

Lord Vestey has been a director of Cheltenham for 21 years but had never had a winner at the Festival until his Karshi oliged at 20-1 in the Stayers' Hurdle.

This was also a first Cheltenham winner for trainer Henrietta Knight who gave most of the credit to Jamie Osborne who rode a beautifully judged waiting race.

Osborne finished with two winners at the meeting but McCoy emerged as leading jockey with three victories. Richard Dunwoody also rode three winners but McCoy won by dint of more placed mounts.

Dunwoody rode a peach of race to win the concluding Vincent O'Brien County Hurdle on Barna Boy who held on by a length from Carlito Brigante, just denied the £50,000 bonus for winning this race plus the Sunderlands Imperial Cup.

Folkestone card with guide to the form

2.00 Pedaltothemetal
2.30 High Learie (nb)
3.00 Sharpical
3.30 The Carrot Man
4.00 Swinging Sixties
4.30 Royal Saxon
5.00 Cue Call

FORM GUIDE - NEWLANDS-GENERAL: Held up, mistake 8th, ridden 4 out, weakened 2 out, 26l 3rd of 5 behind Too Plush (Newbury 2m4f hcp ch, Gd-Sft).
COOLTEEN HERO: Made all, ridden out, won by 6l from Purbeck Cavalier (Plumpton 2m nov ch, Sft).
THE CARROT MAN: Hit 13th, always behind, 8l last of 5 finishers behind Maestro Paul (Wincanton 2m5f hcp ch, Gd).
LAHATA: Every chance when hit last, ridden and not quicken, 2l 2nd to Dr Rocket (Taunton 2m110y hcp ch, gd).

[illegible]

Results

[illegible]

Fakenham

2.10 Blue Domain
2.40 BROAD STEANE (nap)
3.10 Hawaiian Youth
3.40 Lucy Tufty
4.10 Music Master
4.40 The Stuffed Puffin
5.10 Wentworth

[illegible]

5.10 HOLKHAM CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' MAIDEN HURDLE (Div 2) 2m £1,831

1	P/-	ACERBUS DULCIS (909) M Chapman 5-11-8	F Leahy
2		AIR COMMODORE D Arbuthnot 6-11-8	D J Kavanagh
3	0050	HOLKHAM BAY (15) L Wordingham 5-11-8	D Fortt
4		RESERVATION ROCK T Hind 6-11-8	A Bates
5	2-455	WENTWORTH (21) G Thorner 5-11-8	Clare Thorner
6	P	GENEREUX (B) S Mellor 4-11-0	Chris Webb
7		MUHANDAM Mrs D Haine 4-11-0	P Henley
8		CREDITE RISQUE J Glover 4-10-9	R Massey

TOP FORM TIP: Wentworth 8

Betting: 6-4 Air Commodore, 3-1 Wentworth, 6-1 Credite Risque, 7-1 Holkham Bay, Muhandam, 8-1 Reservation Rock. 8 runners

● Blinkered for the first time — FOLKESTONE: 2.00 Prussian Eagle; 4.00 Rustic Gent. SOUTHWELL: 2.20 Noble Canonire; 2.50 Classic Victory, Sarasi; 4.20 Warp Drive. FAKENHAM: 2.10 Antiguan Flyer; 3.10 Lodestone Lad.

Southwell (A.W.)

2.20 Kilmamartyra Girl
2.50 Live Project
3.20 K S Sunshine
3.50 V I P Charlie
4.20 Baileborough Boy
4.50 Roar On Tour
5.20 Genuine John

[illegible]

5.20 NEPTUNE MAIDEN HANDICAP 7f £3,271

1	0325-53	WILL DO (38) M Meade 4-9-10	D Sweeney (5) 5
2	0-03522	GENUINE JOHN (14) J Parkes 4-9-9	J Bramhill (5) 4
3	30/500-5	WHITLEY GRANGE BOY (31) J Eyre 4-9-2	T Williams 3
4	040-52R	MISKY BAY (20) D Cosgrove 4-8-11	M Rimmer 2
5	433-4	SPLASHED (13) T Barron 3-8-5	R Lappin 6
6	04-20	EVENING IN PARIS (38) M Johnston 4-8-2	M Adams 1

TOP FORM TIPS: Genuine John 8, Will Do 7

Betting: 6-4 Genuine John, 2-1 Will Do, 5-1 Splashed, 8-1 Whitley Grange Boy, Evening in Paris, 12-1 Misky Bay. 6 runners

● Richard Hughes will miss the ride on Sorbie Tower at the Dubai World Cup meeting later this month after picking up his second suspension in two days at Cheltenham yesterday. Hughes was found guilty of marking and injuring Paddy's Return, third home in the Bonusprint Stayers' Hurdle, and banned for four days.

Cricket

Bevan brings all his talents to the table

Paul Weaver on Australia's latest secret weapon

MICHAEL BEVAN was once again the last man still in the nets here at St Georges's Park in Port Elizabeth yesterday as Australia prepared for the second Test against South Africa starting today.

As the weary net bowlers trundled in, Australia's coach Geoff Marsh shook his head in awe. "He's the most dedicated cricketer I've ever come across, and I've seen a few. He's a very fit man and a real professional who never stops working at his game, on and off the field." This most intense of men was once so furious with a shot he played in a Sheffield Shield match that, in self-rebuke, he marched into the showers wearing his cricket gear.

When, finally, he relented yesterday and two exhausted net bowlers fell to the ground before him as if in homage, Bevan seemed to realise for the first time how warm it was. "It's too hot to talk here, mate, let's do it under that tree."

Bevan, 26, has overcome a weakness against the short ball to establish himself as a batsman of world class, as Yorkshire members would confirm. He first played for the county in 1995 and last year topped their averages with 64.47, scoring 1,225 runs in only 12 games. But his four wickets cost 369 runs.

What has happened in recent weeks is remarkable. Suddenly he has become a Test-winning bowler of such prowess that Australia no longer have to rely on the great Shane Warne.

When, lacking Warne, they were beaten by India in October by seven wickets on a crumbling Delhi wicket, the captain never thought to give Bevan a bowl. In Australia's last two Test victories, however, against West Indies in Adelaide and now against South Africa in Johannesburg, he has played as one of only four front-line bowlers and taken 16 wickets, more than any of his team-mates. Those wins, each by an innings and almost 200 runs, are among the most commanding in Australia's 120-year Test history.

Bevan's left-arm wrist spin, delivered at pace with plenty of wrong'uns, brought him six for 82 and match figures of 10 for 113 in Adelaide, where he also scored an uncharacteristically patient 85. His bowling also brought the first Test in South Africa to an abrupt end. Yet this is the world's most reluctant bowler. He does not even want to be classified as an all-rounder, although he is batting at No. 7.

"I see myself as a batsman who bowls. The bowling is going good, which is great. It's the pace in my bowling which is getting me the wickets. But I'm really a batsman. That's what I focus on and where my success in Test cricket lies, hopefully. But what worries me now is that the powers that be might view me as something else.

"I am a bit intense. I don't see that as a good or a bad thing, I'm just determined to give myself the best chance to do well."

Australia's captain Mark Taylor, whose faith in Bevan has seen him blossom, says: "Bevo is very close to being an outstanding player but he's not what you'd call a normal Australian cricketer. He's not the sort of guy who goes down to the pub afterwards and has a beer. He'll score 150 and go straight to the gym for a work-out."

Bevan feels his experience of county cricket will help him in this summer's Ashes series. "I enjoyed my time with Yorkshire and would like to go back. And I think they would like me back.

"There are two levels in county cricket. When the pitches are seaming and the bowlers are fresh it can be really difficult. But there are a lot of days when the bowlers are tired and the decks flatten out, and then runs are there for the taking.

"Playing six days a week takes its toll, though. There is a bit of intensity lacking. Playing so much can only be to the detriment of the game in England. They have as many talented players as anyone but other factors affect standards."

The pitch for today's Test looks almost uncannily English, a low, slow, green seamer with enough moisture to enliven the opening session. Australia include Paul Reiffel in their 12 but are expected to be unchanged. South Africa are likely to play the veteran off-spinner Pat Symcox ahead of the unorthodox wrist-spinner Paul Adams. Their coach Bob Woolmer said: "Australia may think they are God's gift to cricket but in this Test we will see how far apart we really are."

Double threat . . . Bevan hones his all-round skills in preparation for today's second Test against South Africa MIKE HEWITT

Graveney enlists help of groundsmen

Mike Selvey on the way-to-win strategy of England's new chairman of selectors

Mike Selvey

DAVID GRAVENEY, England's new chairman of selectors, is to seek the co-operation of groundsmen in furthering plans to regain the Ashes this summer.

Graveney, whose two-year appointment became official yesterday, believes that there is little point in the selectors, coach and captain formulating a strategy if pitches are not produced to fit in with the thinking.

He cites the example of Mike Atherton's first match as captain when the Edgbaston groundsman produced a bare spinning pitch which, with Shane Warne in the ascendant, played into opposition hands as Australia won by eight wickets.

"The strategy and tactics for the series must be decided by the captain and coach, and then their input ceases," Graveney feels. "Then it is up to the selectors to come up with the players to fit the criteria. It is important in terms of beating Australia or whoever we are playing that, having agreed on a strategy, everyone pulls in the same direction, including the groundsmen."

The new chairman does not see such suggestions as contrary to the spirit of the game and is acutely aware that when England play abroad pitches are routinely produced to suit the home side. Little else would be expected.

"I think in terms of working together, and without wishing to portray England as poor hosts, it is an important factor. Frankly, there is no point in the management forming a strategy and then us as selectors producing the type of team we want to implement it if the pitches are completely at variance to what is required. I know from my time working with groundsmen as a county captain that they take great pride in their preparation. But I think we all want the same end, and it must be beneficial for us to sit down together and see what we can agree. Nobody is asking for substandard pitches, just ones that conform more to our way of thinking."

Graveney's appointment was announced at Lord's yesterday by Tim Lamb, chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board, who said: "He has been a selector for two years and is respected by players and administrators alike. He managed the successful A tour to Australia last winter so has first-hand knowledge of our young players. He is a good communicator, has recently retired from first-class cricket and is very much in touch with the modern game."

At 44, Graveney is the youngest chairman since Doug Insole 32 years ago, and he will have "youthful" henchmen in Graham Gooch and Mike Gatting on his selection panel which will be augmented, for the time being, by the captain when he is appointed.

Gooch and Gatting, as former England captains, will lend vast experience to the selection process, though their capacity to watch cricket to order will be limited by their playing commitments.

This, Graveney admitted, posed logistical problems. The Saturday prior to the third Test, for example, would find Gooch at Southend, Gatting in Leeds and Atherton in Worcester. It was he [Graveney], he said, who, with a group of official observers, would be clocking up the mileage. Time spent observing players from the middle is valuable too, he pointed out.

The appointment of this triumvirate completes the rehabilitation into the system of the South African rebel tourists. Gooch and Gatting captained touring sides; Graveney managed the second.

Graveney feels that time has healed that wound. "I can't turn the clock back in terms of what I've done. The reasons for going are still valid in my mind.

"Since that tour I hope I've served the game in this country sufficiently wholeheartedly in various capacities to earn the chance to fulfill this new function."

● Sussex have appointed their veteran Yorksire-born batsman Bill Athey as vice-captain to Peter Moores.

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Waddle move to Forest blocked

Martin Thorpe

CHRIS WADDLE's proposed move to Nottingham Forest was called off yesterday after Bradford City threatened to report the Premiership club to the Football Association for an illegal approach.

Forest had hoped to bring in the 36-year-old former England winger on a free transfer to help their relegation fight and were under the impression that he had a clause in his Bradford contract that would allow him to leave if a Premiership club came in for him.

But the First Division club, whom Waddle joined this season, disagreed. So Forest, who had intended to sign Waddle until the end of next season, will now have to wait until his Bradford contract runs out at the end of this season if they want to sign him.

The exact obstacle to the move is unclear. Reports varyingly suggest that there was no clause, the agreement was only verbal, the clause only allowed him to leave to become a manager, or that Bradford wanted money for the player which Forest were unwilling to pay.

According to Forest's general manager Dave Bassett, "We'd been told that Chris had a clause in his contract that meant he had only to give 24 hours' notice of leaving.

"We thought it was a case of Chris just saying his good-byes to everyone at Bradford and then joining us. That's not the case, we have now discovered. Bradford have him under contract until the end of the season."

The saga left the Bradford chairman Geoffrey Richmond an angry man. "Chris does not have a release clause in his contract allowing him to leave for another club," he said.

"We are in grave danger of relegation and the loss of Chris would be a severe blow. We are shell-shocked at what we have heard about a supposed move to Forest."

He had earlier threatened to report Forest to the FA but later calmed down. "It is very unlikely we would report them for an illegal approach as long as the whole thing now settles down," he said last night.

The signing of Waddle was part of Bassett's team-rebuilding plan after this week's £4.5 million signing of the Celtic striker Pierre van Hooydonk and the £1 million purchase of the Tranmere striker Ian Moore.

Waddle is understood to have wanted to move, having failed to get back into the Premiership since being released by Sheffield Wednesday last season.

"I left last night thinking I was going to move," he said yesterday, "but I think the problem boils down to a verbal agreement I had with the club, and because it's not in writing someone along the line has contested it."

Last-chance Wales go for experience

THERE was a touch of all our yesterdays about the Wales squad announced yesterday for the crucial World Cup qualifier against Belgium in Cardiff on March 29, *writes Martin Thorpe.*

Faced with a game he must win, Wales's manager Bobby Gould has selected one of the most experienced squads of his reign. Neville Southall, absent from last month's friendly against the Republic of Ireland for personal reasons, is back in goal and there are recalls for the Middlesbrough midfielder Clayton Blackmore, the Wolves striker Iwan Roberts and Nottingham Forest's midfielder David Phillips. Blackmore last played for Wales in 1994, Roberts in 1995 and Phillips in January 1996.

Ryan Giggs is again in the squad despite a warning from Gould that if the Manchester United forward kept pulling out of friendly internationals his place might be in jeopardy.

This is an unusually large group of 29 announced by Gould to meet a Fifa deadline while he is abroad at a coaching congress. After he returns he will pare it down to 20, with the excluded players placed on standby.

WALES SQUAD: **Southall** (Everton), **Crossley** (Nottm Forest), **Marriott** (Wrexham), **Jones** (Stockport), **Bowen** (West Ham), **Jenkins** (Huddersfield), **Page** (Watford), **Ready** (QPR), **Symons** (Man C), **Horne** (Birmingham), **Jones** (Wimbledon), **Williams** (Wolves), **Pembridge** (Sheff Wed), **Robinson** (Charlton), **Savage** (Crewe), **Hughes** (Luton), **Speed** (Everton), **Giggs** (Man U), **Hartson** (W Ham), **Blake** (Bolton), **Legg** (Birmingham), **Hughes** (Chelsea), **Saunders** (Nottm Forest), **Browning** (Huddersfield), **Taylor** (Sheff U), **Neilson** (Southampton), **Blackmore** (Middlesbrough), **Phillips** (Nottm Forest), **Roberts** (Wolves).

WALES UNDER-21 SQUAD (v Belgium Under-21, at Swansea, March 28): **Mountain** (Cardiff), **A Williams** (Blackburn), **Bellamy** (Norwich), **Brace** (Wrexham), **Coates** (Swansea), **Edwards** (Swansea), **Haworth** (Cardiff), **Hughes** (A Villa), **Jarman**, **Young**, **Phillips** (all Cardiff), **Oster** (Grimsby), **Ramasut** (Bristol R), **G Roberts** (Liverpool), **P Roberts** (Wrexham), **Robinson** (Wolves), **Rowlands** (Man C), **Thomas** (Blackburn), **E Williams** (Caernarfon).

Merson surgery blow for Arsenal

Russell Thomas and Peter White

ARSENAL's hopes of making a late title assault were set back yesterday when Paul Merson had a hernia operation, putting the forward out for up to six weeks.

It is the latest injury blow to Arsène Wenger, who decided Merson must have surgery immediately when his form slumped. Until recently Merson had played arguably the best football of his career. He missed his only game this season at Everton 13 days ago and now must wait further for the one goal needed to complete his Arsenal century.

He will also be unavailable for England's match against Mexico at Wembley on March 29.

Aston Villa's manager Brian Little hopes to sign the highly rated Dutch striker Roy Makaay for £3 million before the transfer deadline on March 27. Little plans to watch Makaay, 22, play for Vitesse Arnhem next week before making a formal offer.

Villa face fierce competition for Makaay, Vitesse's top scorer with 13 goals this season. Ajax, PSV Eindhoven, and German and Spanish clubs are also interested.

Villa's striker Tommy Johnson may return to Derby, whose manager Jim Smith talked to the player last night as he tried to finalise a deal that could eventually be worth £2.35 million. If Johnson decides to go back, the initial fee will be £2 million. That will rise by £350,000 if Derby stay in the Premiership.

● Gordon Durie, the Rangers and Scotland striker, had an operation for appendicitis yesterday and will miss the Old Firm derby on Sunday.

United silent on Schmeichel

MANCHESTER United are refusing to reveal the contents of a letter sent in reply to the FA's demand for reconciliation between their goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel and Arsenal's Ian Wright after their clashes this season.

Whereas Wright responded swiftly and publicly to the FA's directive, United's solicitor Maurice Watkins would say only: "We want to keep it a private matter."

The FA warned the two players of possible disciplinary action if they were not reconciled. United's deliberation over the furore suggests they believe Schmeichel is the wronged party.

Gordon Watson yesterday decided to drop criminal action against Huddersfield's Kevin Gray over the challenge in last month's derby that left the Bradford striker with a double leg fracture.

Only five minutes before the case was to be heard by Bradford magistrates, City's solicitor Michael Shepherd said they were withdrawing charges "in the interest of the clubs and football generally".

Gray had been due to face two counts of grievous bodily harm under the Offences Against the Person Act. Bradford have also started civil action against Gray and Huddersfield.

Hockey

England drop Sixsmith for visit to Canada

Pat Rowley

JANE SIXSMITH, one of the outstanding women players of the past decade, has been omitted from an England squad containing five uncapped players, for the first tournament under their new coach Maggie Souyave in Vancouver next month.

SQUAD: **S Blanks**, **K Bowden**, **P Miller**, **J Mould**, **C Voss** (all Leicester), **K Brown**, **L Copeland**, **J Smith** (all Slough), **T Cullen**, **L Newcombe**, **C Reid** (all Hightown), **M Davies** (Sutton), **J Empson** (Canterbury), **D Marston-Smith** (Clifton), **H Rose** (unatt), **L Wright** (Olton).

Sport in brief

Snooker

The new, speeded-up Peter Ebdon crushed John Parrott 5–0 yesterday to be first into the semi-finals of the Thailand Open in Bangkok. "Someone stopped me in the street the other day and told me a certain player was putting the game back 20 years. Then he said I was going the same way," said Ebdon, now determined to be less ponderous around the table.

Cricket

The death of the all-rounder Leo O'Brien at 89 leaves Sir Don Bradman as Australia's only survivor of the Bodyline series won 4–1 by England in 1932–33. In Sydney, where England won by eight wickets, O'Brien scored his Test-best 61.

Badminton

Indonesia's world champion Heryanto Arbi, the game's most spectacular smasher and fully fit again, reached the Yonex All-England semi-finals in Birmingham yesterday, *writes Richard Jago.* So did the women's world champion, Ye Zhaoying of China, who avenged her Atlanta Olympic defeat by Korea's Kim Ji-hyun with a compelling 11–7, 11–1 win.

Results

Golf

PORTUGUESE OPEN (Aroeira): **Leading first-round scores** (GB/Irl unless stated): **65** P O'Malley (Aus). **66** M Anglert (Swe). **67** V Phillips, A Sotomayor (Por), D Hospital (Sp), M Jonzon (Swe). **68** J Wade (Aus), P Broadhurst, P Lawrie, M Roe, P Linhart (Sp), W Riley (Aus). **69** M A Jimenez (Sp), A Cejka (Ger), M Davis, N Fasth (Swe); W Bennett, S Allan (Aus), R Russell, D Borrego (Sp), J M Carriles (Sp), I Garrido (Sp), A Cabrera (Arg), G Clark, P Golding, P Affleck. **70** M James, D Clarke, I Pyman, J M Olazabal (Sp), J Rask (Swe), P Mitchell, R Boxall, R Coles, M Farry (Fr), D Silva (Por), C Mason, T Johnstone (Zimb), S Henderson, M A Martin (Sp), P Curry, P Quirici (Switz), A Bossert (Switz), A Binaghi (It), D Muscroft, A Sandywell. **71** J Sandelin (Swe), S Luna (Sp), J Haeggman (Swe), G Orr, M Pallberg (Swe), S Grappasonni (It), R Claydon, J Rivero (Sp), D Higgins, M Scarpa (It), O Edlund (Swe), M McLean, R Lee, J Coceres (Arg), B Lane, I Fellu (Sp), K Eriksson (Swe), A Hunter, A Sherborne, M Tunnicliff, M Goggin (Aus), J Gronberg (Swe), S McAllister. **72** F Vanoli (Fin), D Chopra (Swe), G Evans, S Cage, E Romero (Arg), J Dias (Por), I Garbutt, J-F Remesy (Fr), R Muntz (Neth), A Cabrera (Arg), F Valera (Sp), M Mouland, J Robson, P McGinley, K Tomori (Japan), D Cole (Aus), J C Pinero (Sp), B May (US), S Webster, S Scahill (NZ).

KENYAN OPEN (Muthaiga): **Leading first-round scores** (GB/Irl unless stated; *=amateur): **65** P Harrison. **66** S Dundas (SA), J Cantero (Arg). **67** M Miller, B McColl, C Van der Velde (Neth), S Bennett, F Kamau (Ken). **68** M Bannister (Fr), Van der Walt (SA), G Stussman, F Guzzolard (Fr), M Stubbs, R Nelson (Ken), Carlsson (US), *J Pancer (Fr). **69** S Cronin, M Litton, M Pullen, A Collins, L James, F Coa (Sp), M Beale (Fr), H Danndorp (Neth), K Storegaard (Den), B Cuniberg (Swe).

Tennis

COPENHAGEN OPEN: **Second Round:** **L Burgsmuller** (Ger) bt F Dilucia (It) 6–3, 6–4. **M Damm** (Cz) bt N Marques (Por) 6–3, 3–6, 6–3. **G Raoux** (Fr) bt D Prinosil (Ger) 7–5, 6–4.

EVERT CUP (Indian Wells, Calif): **Quarter-finals:** **M J Fernandez** (US) bt C Martinez (Sp) 6–4, 6–4; **I Spirlea** (Rom) bt N Tauziat (Fr) 6–4, 6–2; **L Davenport** (US) v Williams (US) 6–4, 5–7, 7–6.

Alpine Skiing

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP FINALS (Vail, Colorado): **Super-G:** 1, K Seizinger (Ger) 1min 15.72sec; 2, H Gerg (Ger) 1.16.53; 3, M Ertl (Ger) 1.17.01; 4, I H Marken (Nory) 1.17.07; 5, F Masnada (Fr) 1.17.28; 6, L Dalloz (Fr) 1.17.45. **Final Super-G standings:** 1, Gerg 490pts; 2, Seizinger 474; 3, P Wiberg (Swe) 449. **Overall standings:** 1, Wiberg 1,815pts; 2, Seizinger 1,284; 3, Gerg 1,100.

Badminton

ALL-ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS (Birmingham): **Quarter-finals:** **Men:** **D Jiong** (China) bt P Rasmussen (Den) 15–12, 15–8; **H Arbi** (Indo) bt L Yigang (China) 8–15, 15–9, 15–6. **Women:** **D Yun** (China) bt Z Ning (China) 5–11, 12–11, 11–8; **Ye Zhaoying** (China) bt K Ji-Hyun (S Kor) 11–7, 11–1.

Basketball

EUROLEAGUE: Eles Pilsen 84, Maccabi Tel Aviv 69.

NBA: Indiana 92, Atlanta 82; NJ 102, Utah 117; Philadelphia 104, Chicago 108; Washington 104, Vancouver 82; Houston 95, Orlando 96; LA Lakers 109, Golden State 101.

Bowls

BRITISH INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Ballymoney, NI): **England** bt Wales 113–103.

Cricket

SHEFFIELD SHIELD: **Sydney:** Tasmania 370–4 (J Cox 143, R Ponting 64) v New South Wales. **Brisbane:** Queensland 277; South Australia 26–3. **Melbourne:** Victoria 205–9 (S Craig 30no) v Western Australia.

Cycling

PARIS-NICE RACE: **Fifth stage** (Cournon d'Auvergne to Venissieux, 197km): 1, T Steels (Bel) Mapei 5hr 20min 48sec; 2, M Cipollini (It) Saeco; 3, L Jalabert (Fr) ONCE; 4, J Jacques Henry (Fr) Big Mat; 5, C Capelle (Fr) Cofidis; 6, F Baldato (It) MG-Technogym. **Overall standings:** 1, Jalabert 19.07.14; 2, P Chanteur (Fr) Casino at 24sec; 3, Steels 26; **Also:** 20, M Sciandri (GB) Française des Jeux 1.06.

Hockey

WORLD CUP MEN'S QUALIFYING (Kuala Lumpur): **Semi-finals:** Spain 5, New Zealand 1; Poland 0, Korea 1. **Places 5–8:** Canada 2, Argentina 0; Malaysia 3, Belgium 0 (Malaysia and Canada qualify). **9–12:** S Africa 4, Ireland 0; Switzerland 2, Belarus 0.

REPRESENTATIVES: Army 2, Civil Service 4; Royal Navy 5, British Police 3.

Ice Hockey

PREMIER LEAGUE PLAY-OFFS: Guildford 4, Telford 2; Swindon 4, Slough 1.

Snooker

THAILAND OPEN (Bangkok): **Quarter-finals:** **P Ebdon** (Eng) bt J Parrott (Eng) 5–0; **R O'Sullivan** (Eng) bt S Lee (Eng) 5–3.

Squash

AUSTRIAN OPEN (Linz): **Quarter-finals:** **Men:** **J Khan** (Pak) bt P Gregory (Gr) 15–12, 15–14, 5–15, 8–15, 15–6; (Fr) bt G Ryding (Can) 11–15, 15–11, 15–6, 15–13; **D Jenson** (Aus) bt Z Jahan (Pak) 15–14, 15–8, 15–9; **R Eyles** (Aus) bt C Rowland (Aus) w/o. **Women:** **N Tippett** (Aus) bt J Hickey (Aus) 9–1, 9–2, 9–2; **S Wright** (Eng) bt N Grainger (SA) 1–9, 9–6, 4–9, 9–3, 9–7; **K Major** (Aus) bt A Hopps (Aus) 9–3, 9–2, 9–4; **E Major** (Aus) bt M Jans (Can) 1–9, 9–7, 10–8, 9–4.

Fixtures

(7.30 unless stated)

Soccer

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: **Third Division:** Cardiff v Doncaster; Colchester v Mansfield (7.45).

UNIBOND LEAGUE: **First Division:** Radcliffe Bor v Gt Harwood Tn.

S-E COUNTIES LEAGUE: **Second Division:** Bristol Rvrs v Crystal Palace (11.0).

LEAGUE OF WALES: Ebbw Vale v Cwmbran.

FAI NATIONAL LEAGUE: **Premier Division:** Shamrock Rvrs v HF Everton (7.45).

Rugby League

STONES SUPER LEAGUE: Bradford v Warrington.

FIRST DIVISION: Dewsbury v Hull KR (7.45).

Rugby Union

A INTERNATIONAL: France v Scotland (6.30, Rodez).

U-21 INTERNATIONAL: France v Scotland (6.0, Ales).

CLUB MATCHES: Aberavon v Bristol (7.0); Bedford v Gloucester; Moseley v Northampton; Nottingham v Leicester (7.15); Cross Keys v Newport (7.0); Boroughmuir v Stewarts Mel FP; Kelso v Watsonians (7.15); Musselburgh v Biggar (7.15); Hawick v Peebles (7.15).

REPRESENTATIVES (7.30, Cardiff): Welsh U v English U, England S v Wales S.

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Manchester v Newcastle.

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Rugby Union

A double dose of Davies for Wales

Paul Rees

WALES's declared intent of bidding a winning farewell to the National Stadium in Cardiff at England's expense tomorrow looked optimistic last night when injuries forced them to make five changes to the side that lost narrowly in Paris a month ago.

The outside-half Arwel Thomas, the lock Mark Rowley and the flanker Colin Charvis had already been withdrawn, but the wing Ieuan Evans and centre Scott Gibbs, Wales's only two Test players on the 1993 Lions tour to New Zealand, yesterday ran out of time after struggling all week with calf and neck strains respectively.

Wales have only defeated England once in the 1990s, in Cardiff four years ago when, as now, injuries forced them to field an unfamiliar side. They surged to victory on a tide of frenzied emotion that day, and they will need passions to run high for a repeat tomorrow.

It will not only be the last international staged on the ground — which used to be called Cardiff Arms Park — before a new 73,000-seat incarnation called the Millennium Stadium rises from the rubble, but it will be the final time Jonathan Davies pulls on the red jersey, though the Wales coach Kevin Bowring hopes to persuade the outside-half to continue in international rugby.

The 34-year-old Davies, whose faint hope of touring South Africa with the Lions this summer will be extinguished unless he controls play against England, has announced that it will be his last appearance for Wales, and he intends to end this chapter of his career as he started it in 1985, with a victory over the English in Cardiff.

"It seems a long time ago," he said. "Then, as now, I had to wait a long time before knowing if I was in the side.

"The game against England in Cardiff has more meaning for the Welsh nation than any other match, and a win would stimulate a considerable feel-good factor. It would also confirm the progress we have made with the team this year."

Gibbs's injury heralds the return of the 32-year-old centre Nigel Davies, who lost his place after being injured against France last September. His was one of the surprise names in the provisional 62-man squad announced by the Lions last month and he will be marking one of the players he was chosen ahead of, the England captain Phil de Glanville.

The Llanelli centre said: "Being recognised by the Lions gave me a real lift. Llanelli started playing well again and now I am back in the Wales side. It is unfortunate for Scott. I know exactly how he feels."

The Cardiff wing Simon Hill replaces Evans, and Llanelli's Mike Voyle will partner Gareth Llewellyn in the second row. In the back row, Charvis's position at breakaway goes to Ebbw Vale's Kingsley Jones, with Gwyn Jones still injured.

WALES: N Jenkins (Pontypridd); S Hill (Cardiff), A Bateman (Richmond), N Davies (Llanelli), G Thomas (Bridgend); J Davies, R Howley (both Cardiff); C Loader (Swansea), J Humphreys (capt), D Young (both Cardiff), Gareth Llewellyn (Harlequins), M Voyle (Llanelli), S Williams (Neath), K Jones (Ebbw Vale), S Quinnell (Richmond). Replacements: S John (Llanelli), P John (Pontypridd), G Jenkins (Swansea), D McIntosh (Pontypridd), W Proctor (Llanelli), C Quinnell (Richmond).

● Alex Evans is to return to Cardiff next month as the club's coaching director on a four-year contract. The Queenslander coached Wales in the 1995 World Cup and spent three years at the Arms Park before returning to Australia 15 months ago.

He will be on a salary of around £75,000.

One last heave . . . Wales training yesterday at the National Stadium, a ground that tomorrow hosts an international for the final time in its present form

Best pours more scorn on Rowell

Robert Armstrong

JACK ROWELL yesterday received a fresh critical broadside from his former assistant coach Dick Best, who scorned his decision to bring the 34-year-old Rob Andrew on to the bench for tomorrow's Triple Crown attempt against Wales in Cardiff.

It is the second time this season that Best, now Harlequins' director of rugby, has attacked Rowell during the countdown to an important international.

Best, who was sacked from his England job by Rowell in August 1994, accused the England coach of undermining the morale of talented younger players by calling Andrew, who has 70 caps, out of retirement. He also suggested that Rowell's action was prompted by selfish motives.

"It shows Rowell has hit the panic button and it smacks of self-preservation," he said. "It sends out a terrible message to young players in England. They must be wondering what the hell is going on."

Shortly before England's defeat by the New Zealand Barbarians last November, Best claimed the Rugby Football Union had no confidence in Rowell and would not renew his one-year contract when it expired this summer. Best also suggested Rowell had recalled the Leicester No. 8 Dean Richards for last year's Calcutta Cup match against Scotland merely "to save his job" after he had come under pressure as coach.

Andrew will be on the replacements' bench tomorrow as back-up goalkicker to cover Mike Catt, the Bath flyhalf, who will be playing his first Five Nations match this season. Paul Grayson has had to withdraw with a hip muscle injury.

Rowell, who this season has also been accused by the former England manager Geoff Cooke of talking "mumbo-jumbo", was quick to respond to the latest attack.

He said last night: "I cannot understand why former recent England managers and coaches criticise policy and selection in the build-up to important matches.

"It has been happening periodically this season and is disruptive to preparations and can be distracting to the team.

"I don't criticise the way other coaches and managers work with their teams. My record speaks for itself. The teams I have coached have won something in every year since 1984, except when Bath had a double slip-up in 1988."

Visionary behind England's forward surge

Robert Armstrong talks to Tim Stimpson a full-back who emulates the great Blanco

TIM STIMPSON may have won a long-term commission in Jack Rowell's new model army of committed young professionals, yet in another era he would have been the perfect example of the gifted all-round amateur who excels without apparent effort.

Like his favourite player Serge Blanco, the Newcastle and England full-back brings an enterprising intellectual vision to the game that reflects his intense interest in social anthropology — his degree subject at Durham — and gives his play added perspective.

If rugby had not gone professional 19 months ago it is possible Stimpson would have been tempted to persevere with his cricket career, in summer at least, having opened the batting and kept wicket for Yorkshire Schools in the early Nineties. At 6ft 3in and 15st 8lb, this strapping 23-year-old packs a fearsome wallop, whether he is hammering the round ball to the boundary or the oval one down the touchline. Like Liam Botham, though, he was forced to specialise and rugby got his vote.

England's interactive style places huge responsibility on individuals to make working decisions, and Stimpson is a thinker and leader as well as a force of nature. "It's a fantastic opportunity to go out there and test yourself as a member of the England team," he acknowledged after yesterday's squad session at Bisham Abbey.

"A lot of people are involved in the England set-up to help you produce your best game and to meet the different challenges presented by the different teams we've met so far. Since I gave up cricket I've become totally geared to rugby, and now I want to explore my potential to the limit."

Surprisingly, Stimpson regards this season's defeats by the New Zealand Barbarians and France as the internationals in which he gave the fullest expression to his range of abilities. "On both occasions I was on my mettle from the first minute, knowing they would attack from anywhere at any time. You had to be fully focused defensively and if any scoring chance came your way you knew you had to be ruthless enough to finish it off.

"The France game was very strange to play in. After half-time we stretched our lead with two penalties, yet I felt the game had changed and an ominous tide was coming against us. It was a case of working out what we could do to hang on — obviously you set out to perform at your maximum — but unfortunately we couldn't do it."

Stimpson, who has played in five internationals to date, is one of the 27 Englishmen included in Fran Cotton's preliminary Lions squad of 62 players and his prospects of getting into the final squad of 35 look rosy. In December he played for the Barbarians in their high-profile Twickenham clash with Australia, making a premature exit with concussion and subsequently missing England's victory over Argentina, but his forceful Baa-Baas contribution offered a strong pointer to Lions selection.

"I never envisaged becoming a complete England player in my first two or three internationals," he said. "Still, with each game I've become more confident and gained more knowledge about what to expect.

"I need to use that experience to create problems for our opponents, and, as our communication lines improve internally, the pressure we develop should punch more holes in the opposition and allow us to score more tries."

Since switching from struggling West Hartlepool, where he was captain, to Newcastle, who have lost only two games this season, Stimpson has reaped the benefit of daily training alongside 13 other internationals, some of whom have been league professionals for years. "Full-time summer training also made me a better, stronger player," he said. "The opportunity to work with and talk to good internationals in a club environment has built up pressure habits which are invaluable whenever I play for England."

His feeling that his personal best is yet to come is underlined by England's failure to make the best use of his skills in broken play, an aspect of Blanco's game which the Englishman has emulated since he was a boy.

"Blanco was a fantastic footballer with real flair for the counter-attack. He was always willing to try things, which is something I have long admired." Little wonder that Stimpson has been dubbed "Serge" by his teammates.

The weight of tradition that hangs over every Wales-England fixture does not preoccupy Stimpson, who tends to analyse matches in terms of individuals rather than nations and their characteristic styles.

"A broad spectrum of individual personalities will be involved on both sides, though I admit Welshmen have been known for a kind of cockiness that says simply wearing a Welsh shirt will make them the better side. A similar attitude can be found among New Zealanders and South Africans.

"On the other hand England have been said to have good players who, perhaps, don't quite believe in themselves. Certainly the people in the current squad don't think that way. We believe we're just as capable — in fact more capable — than the people we play against.

"It will be my first game at the Arms Park. I'm looking forward to it immensely."

All-round talent . . . Stimpson was a handy cricketer

Rugby League

Edwards wants free transfer to London

Paul Fitzpatrick

SHAUN EDWARDS, the most successful player in the sport's history, wants to join London Broncos and has asked Wigan to give him a free transfer on compassionate grounds.

Wigan's board will discuss this on Tuesday and may agree to his release if Tony Smith, Castleford's £150,000-rated half-back, moves to Central Park. Whether they would allow their outstanding 30-year-old scrum-half to go for nothing is another matter.

Edwards's girlfriend Heather Small, lead singer of the group M People, is due to give birth and Edwards sees his future in London. He has not trained all week and has been left out of the side for Sunday's match with Halifax.

"Leaving would be a massive wrench after so long but my family is in London now and sometimes there are considerations in life other than sport," said Edwards, who joined Wigan on his 17th birthday in 1983.

He has scored 274 tries for the club, and his departure would be another disappointment for fans unhappy at the recent exits of the coach Graeme West and Va'aiga Tuigamala, and the sale of Central Park to Tesco.

Bristol, the League One union club, have lost interest in John Devereux, the Widnes back, after being quoted a fee of £150,000.

Warrington are without Iestyn Harris, Paul Sculthorpe, Paul Hulme and Richard Henare for tonight's match at Bradford. Chris Holden, Gareth Davies, Toa Kohe-Love and Mark Forster are recalled.

Tennis

Rusedski return gives Davis Cup hopes a lift

Stephen Bierley

GREG RUSEDSKI, having recovered from a wrist injury and a throat infection, will be back in action next week in the St Petersburg Open, which is good news for David Lloyd, Britain's Davis Cup captain.

Rusedski, with Britain's No. 1 Tim Henman, will spearhead the team against Zimbabwe next month in the Euro-African Zone Group One tie. Victory would give Britain a chance to qualify for the elite World Group later this year.

Henman pulled out of this week's ATP tournament in Indian Wells, California with an elbow injury but his coach David Felgate has played down its seriousness and Henman hopes to return for the Lipton Championships in Florida beginning next Thursday.

Clearly Lloyd would want both Henman and Rusedski fully fit and match sharp before playing Zimbabwe at Crystal Palace on April 4-6.

Zimbabwe will almost certainly be represented by the Black brothers, Byron and Wayne. With home advantage, and provided Henman and Rusedski are fully fit, Lloyd would expect his team to win, but the Black brothers are a formidable doubles team and Britain has no settled partnership.

Andrew Richardson, the tall 22-year-old left-hander and Britain's current No. 6 (world ranking 271), has been added to the squad and could possibly team up with Henman.

Eyes down for open season

Paul Fitzpatrick on Super League 2, which starts tonight

WHATEVER difficulties may lie ahead for rugby league, few seasons have been more eagerly awaited than Super League 2, which opens at Odsal Stadium tonight when the Bradford Bulls take on the Warrington Wolves.

There were concerns that an over-long close season could be to the sport's disadvantage. But the wait has worked in its favour. The sense of anticipation is tangible and appetites have been whetted by the Silk Cut Challenge Cup, now down to the last four.

There is also the feeling that this could be one of the most open competitions for years. That has to be good, even though it does arise largely as a result of Wigan's fall from pre-eminence.

It would be unwise, though, to underestimate Wigan, and in spite of the departures of so many quality players they should be in contention with Bradford, St Helens and others for the title.

The struggle at the other end may be no less intense, for there are no obvious candidates for relegation.

Intertwined with the league programme will be the World Club Championship, a unique event which will pit all 22 European and Australasian Super League clubs against one another over two periods starting in June and finishing in August. Ultimately two sides will emerge to contest the final in Australia in October.

The importance of the tournament cannot be overstressed, even though this may be the first and last time it takes this format.

All the signs from Australia suggest that the two rival camps of Super League and Australian Rugby League will be back as one next year, and although unity is to be welcomed it is also worrying for the British game.

Rupert Murdoch, who is bankrolling Super League, possibly never saw the European game as more than a bit player, a pawn in his plans to extend his influence in Australia.

He might lose interest altogether if he secures control of a powerful, united Australian game.

It would be wonderful, then, if a European club could win the World Club Challenge; but in any event it is essential that the northern hemisphere sides give bold, competitive accounts of themselves.

They may, as the game's critics keep telling us ad nauseam, have sold their souls to the devil, but the object of the exercise is to make themselves indispensable when the devil negotiates his next contract.

Murdoch's current deal is for £87 million over five years. When that contract expires the European clubs will, ideally, have reached such a level of excellence and be providing such dazzling entertainment that Murdoch will not think twice about continuing with his investment.

It may not work out that way, of course. But rugby league has an opportunity, the like of which it has never previously had, to prove that it is the finest spectator sport on the planet.

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Stuart Pearce - no time for losers
NEW LOOK
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SportsGuardian

THE CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL

Unreal McCoy's golden double

Frank Keating sees a bold display by Mr Mulligan complete a remarkable week for the 22-year-old champion jockey

TONY McCOY *punched* the air in the obligatory manner. "Fantastic, unbelievable, brilliant," he exclaimed breathlessly. What adjectives might he have found had he realised he had joined an extremely short list of immortals. It was an hour before anyone told him.

On the face of it, time for an all-night hooley. The hale-faced Irish trainer wore a Guinness freebie tie. The four-footer had a full-blown Irish name as well as a McCoy to steer him. But Mr Mulligan was trained in England and he was owned by an Englishman, straight-backed with a moustache and tweeded, who seems as English as, well, Worcestershire sauce — although Michael Worcester, who makes cones for ice-creams in south Gloucestershire, did let it slip that his mother had been born in Ireland.

It was a victory of grandeur. McCoy and Mr Mulligan slapped down the gauntlet with a dandy flourish about halfway round the three and a bit miles and not one of the highly fancied field came near to pick it up. "Slap" was the operative word, which ensured Mr Mulligan carried the astonishing 22-year-old Master McCoy into the history books.

"He misjudged an early fence so I gave him a little slap, which wound him up. I gave him another little one three or four from home; I thought I might have hit him too hard but he didn't think so, he just took off."

The slaps ensured McCoy's place on the topmost plinth of Festival jockeys' all-time hall of fame. Only nine riders had been crowned with the laurel twice at the same meeting after both the Champion Hurdle and the Gold Cup. McCoy joined the immortals. Pre-war this double was done by Wilson (Golden Miller's pilot) and Stott, Leader, Cullinan and Rees; since racing resumed here in 1946, by Brabazon, Molony, Winter and most recently by Williamson.

Sorry, but meteoric is the only word for McCoy. Once the great names of the last generation, Francome and Scudamore, had slipped down from their saddles for the last time, a new hierarchy at once was in place with the likes of Dunwoody, Swan and Williamson. Then Maguire. But suddenly, as if from nowhere, McCoy has exploded out of the paddocks. Those in the know still find it difficult to pigeonhole him or his voluptuous talent. He is no stylist: he is too tall and even gangly for that. He is strong all right, his storming finishes are testament to that — not that he needed to display it for either part of this resplendent double this week, in which both the Blue Riband races had him destroying the field long before the rise that kills and the post.

But what the engaging Irishman most palpably has is a racer's intellect and daring and a superb judgment of pace. That he illustrated with knobs on this week.

"The plan was to take it up early if he seemed happy, if not sit back comfy in fourth or fifth and see what happened. But the first slap showed me he was more than a little bit keen and when we went past Brendan [Powell, on Dublin Flyer] and into the lead I could tell he loved it out front.

"Sure it's been an unbelievable week. First day, when I won the Arkle, I thought to myself, 'Jeez!', then the Champion and I said, 'Dear God, what's happening?' Now this . . . What's left to say?"

If he was thinking of miracles it needed one to get him to the Festival. Six weeks ago it looked as if his season had ended, if not his racing year. At Wincanton he was unshipped heavily, knocked out and woke up in hospital with a broken shoulder-blade and smashed collar-bone. "I can't remember a thing except taking off at the first fence, then black-out . . . Then I remember coming to in terrible pain and the gas, the oxygen or whatever, reviving me."

Astonishingly he was back in the saddle within a month. He puts it all down to physiotherapy and swimming "and Mr Pipe giving me a few gentle favourites who didn't pull too hard so I could get my confidence back".

McCoy's teaming up with Martin Pipe obviously helped the jockey's electric progress into no end of winners' enclosures. As a horse-mad kid, McCoy had ambitions to race on the Flat. "Well, higher wages isn't it?" he laughs. "I always loved jumping, mind. I broke my leg in 1994 and, recovering, I put on a stone and felt happier for it, so jumping it was. I'm rather pleased about that now, aren't I?"

The first Gold Cup to make an impression on him was Dawn Run's victory, which sent his whole little land delirious in 1986. That late and much-loved animal itself won the famous double of Champion Hurdle and Gold Cup — even more unusual for a horse than the hall-of-fame jockeys.

My father first brought me here half a century ago. It was more like an end-of-term point-to-point prizegiving, with its little low-slung splintery old grandstand. I must have seen a couple of those early "doubles" — Brabazon's two for sure: he was the son of the famous Lord who raced motor cars and built huge aeroplanes that had trouble getting off the ground . . . McCoy and Mr Mulligan had no problem there yesterday as the horse vaulted the rider into the most select and auspicious company in the long history of this thunderous sport itself used to the utmost grandeur.

Festival final day, page 13

'I won the Champion and said Dear God, what's happening? Now this . . . What's left to say?'

Easy riders Pos war big race doubles at Cheltenham

Year	Jockey	Champion Hurdle	Gold Cup
1997	Tony McCoy	Make A Stand	Mr Mulligan
1995	Norman Williamson	Alderbrook	Master Oats
1961	Fred Winter	Ebonwater	Saffron Tartan
1953	Tim Molony	Sir Ken	Knock Hard
1950	Aubrey Brabazon	Hatton's Grace	Cottage Rake
1949	Aubrey Brabazon	Hatton's Grace	Cottage Rake

Winning is good for you . . . Tony McCoy bends his right arm to celebrate Mr Mulligan's Gold Cup triumph FRANK BARON

Vincent Hanna

Fall guys riding up the wrong escalator

ARCHY the cockroach described the antics of a drunk vainly trying to fall down the upward-moving escalator of a New York subway station. As fast as he tumbled, so it carried him up. But he stuck at it; it was his God-given right to fall down escalators and he would not be beaten by this one.

He might have been a Leicester City or Wimbledon fan, among others. This has been a season in which more than one club has been picking the wrong escalators to fall up.

How else can you explain Chesterfield? On Tuesday, before a crowd of 3,368, they lost to Bournemouth three-nil and, as Archy could have told you, they were lucky to get nil. Yet they go to play Middlesbrough in the FA Cup semi-finals.

Tony Benn, the local MP, is so excited about it that he has taken to swathing himself in blue and talking football. "Fortunately the semi-final is on a Sunday so it won't disrupt the election campaign too much." Chesterfield has had little to cheer about, with the destruction of its coal industry, but now the town is ecstatic. "Just to see them run out at Old Trafford before the entire town will be memorable," said Tony. So it will.

Leicester also seem to have chosen the wrong escalator. Normally they live in decent obscurity. I used to go there as a football reporter, but try as I may I cannot remember a single thing about the place; except their rugby team, oh, and Gordon Banks; he played for Leicester when England won the World Cup, then he went to Stoke City.

Peter Shilton played for *them and he went to Stoke too.* Gary Lineker started his career there. So did lots of others. They won the League Cup in 1963-64, but nothing else.

This season, but for a referee's bum decision, they might have been in two finals. They have achieved extraordinary things by being ordinary and working at it hard; their honest struggle against Wimbledon on Tuesday night was a prime example. The difference is a passionate, dogged Ulsterman called Martin O'Neill. "See him," as they say in Belfast, "he's not ordinary."

At Nottingham Forest in 1974 he was dropped from the first team for undisciplined conduct. The local paper chided him that he had been plucked from obscurity and should mind his manners. Martin tartly reminded them: "I was plucked from law studies at Queen's University, Belfast, and not from the local labour exchange."

I WAS at university with his brother Gerry, who is a teacher. I ran into him at Old Trafford in the Seventies and he told me that Martin had brought his entire family to England to get away from the Troubles.

Martin won a League Championship and two European Cup medals with Forest, and 64 caps for Northern Ireland. He did not finish his legal *studies but instead took a Masters* degree from the Brian Clough academy of soccer. "He was a great teacher," said Martin, "but the key is not to imitate him."

When his playing career ended through injury at 33 he served an eight-year management apprenticeship from 1987 to 1995 with Grantham Town, Shepshed Charterhouse and Wycombe Wanderers. He resigned after five months at Norwich City because of clashes with the chairman Robert Chase, and succeeded Brian Little at Filbert Street.

Martin has a passion for football, but he is quite keen on mass murder. He queued all night to see the trials of the Yorkshire Ripper and Dennis Nilsen. He nearly went back to law in the mid-Seventies but helped win the European Cup instead.

"What carries me on is enthusiasm," he told me. "I reckon I'm hopeless at organisation. But the thing is to make players do what they're capable of, and just now they're doing that for me."

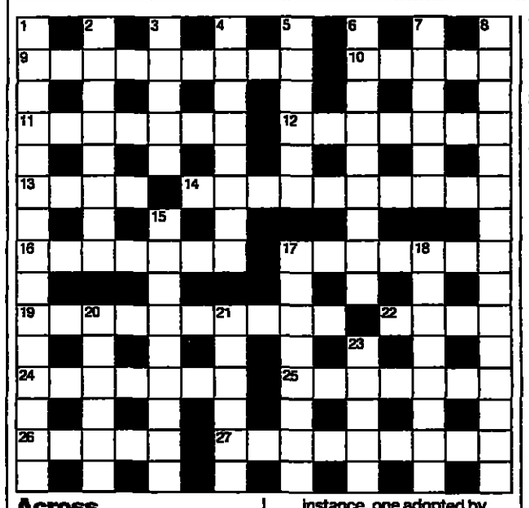
Back to drunks and escalators. Archy the cockroach (the alta ego, in case you were wondering, of Don Marquis who lives in three delightful volumes of free verse) misquotes Longfellow in a tribute to that escalatory drunk.

Martin should stick it on his *office wall — if he hasn't* already.

The heights by great men
reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden
flight
But they, while their companions slept,
Were falling upward in the
night.

Guardian Crossword No 20,911

Set by Plodge

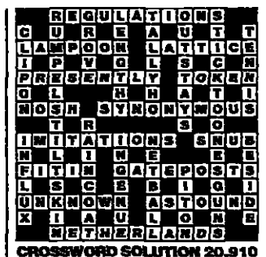


Across

9 It issues a charge when swallow circles the island (9)
10 Easter Island's little castaway girl (5)
11 Sides the European quits? (7)
12,22 The pollster's passing prompt (7,4)
13 Displays affectations (4)
14 Oxford's system, for instance, one adopted by island goddess (10)
16 Match Northumberland, if retiring to a lake (7)
17 Polish off speaking the lingo? (7)
19 Assured to get due process established around the island (10)
22 See 12
24 A singular scrap of Celtic savour (7)
25 Taken by stages to be trained (7)
26 The bondsman's island in the lough? (5)
27 Price returned shirtless after apparent upset (9)

Down

1 Greens plot began great delve for recycling (9,6)
2 Islands' bar spared from uncivilised reception of porter (8)
3 Meant to be utterly celebrated (5)
4 The first barren Greek island to manage film-making equipment (8)
5 Upset the French hair lacquer (6)
6 Scold great man catching the last post out (9)
7 Capital Churchill signed away to be replaced by second colour? (6)
8 Had a bit of a fling with Rapunzel and Godiva? (3,4,4,4)
15 Blames rep unfairly for making overtures (9)
17 The foremost fledgling fornicator to furnish flights? (8)
18 Occasional hot-line is set up to the island (8)
20 Some nonsense on the tip of Nantucket Island (6)
21 Speak hesitantly to hide embellishment (6)
23 Good spirit protecting a falcon's island (5)



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